

Errant colleges need to be dealt with severely

EXTRA that schools and colleges charge admission seekers and even candidates preparing to take public examinations at the secondary and higher secondary levels has not been a new tale, at least in about a decade. The latest manifestation that is taking place now is colleges charging admission fees up to five times the amount the government has set, putting extra burden on the guardians. As New Age reported on Tuesday, colleges in Dhaka are charging between Tk 9,000 and Tk 30,000 although the government has set admission fees at Tk 5,000 for colleges that are on the monthly pay order and Tk 9,000 for colleges not enjoying the facility in the capital, Tk 3,000 for colleges in metropolitan cities and Tk 2,000 for colleges in district headquarters. While colleges have been charging admission seekers an additional amount for a few years, schools have been doing so for a longer period. And this has continued even amid warning by relevant authorities. As for additional amount being charged by schools from Secondary School Certificate candidates, the High Court has, as New Age reported on Sunday, directed the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education to disband the managing committees of five schools by July for their failure to return the additional fees they had taken from candidates of 2015 SSC examinees.

Earlier, relevant authorities warned schools and colleges against charging students extra during admission and registration for public examinations. But nothing tangible has happened, which, in turn, only encourages educational institutions to keep charging additional amounts. Allegations are rife that most of the colleges are amassing the additional fees under different dubious heads. It has, regrettably, been commonplace that on every occasion, there is uproar about the issue and that the top brass of the ministry come up with pledges aplenty to get tough on errant educational institutions only to fall into a slumber of indifference once the hue and cry is over. Undoubtedly, such inaction on the part of the government has further emboldened the college and school authorities to pursue their means to earn unauthorised money.

It cannot be denied that the vast majority of the students that get admitted to colleges belong to fixed income groups — the people who need to struggle hard to keep run their family as there has been an unabated surge in goods prices. The government, therefore, needs to realise that the extra amounts imposed on these students will invariably add to miseries of their guardians. As constitutionally bound to provide education for all, and also pledge-bound to ensure free education up to graduate level, it has no room for dithering about reining in errant colleges. Above all, conscious citizens need to raise their voice in a sustained manner in this regard.