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Compulsory Primary Education

Director General

Compulsory Primary Education Implementation Monitoring Unit,
Primary and Mass Education Division.

Educated manpower is a prerequisite for successful implementation of different development programmes. For this reason, in all the countries of the world, measures have been taken to impart education to all specially, at primary levels with utmost seriousness. In our country too, the present democratic government has taken up various measures to ensure "Education for All by the Year 2000". Of all these, the Compulsory Primary Education Implementation Programme has been given top priority.

In this region, the idea of making primary education compulsory and to materialise it was initiated in the early 20th century. In this connection, it was observed that the celebrated politician of British India Gokhle, realising the importance of educating the people of India under the British rule, presented a Bill in 1912 in the Imperial Legislative Council. It was annulled by 38-13 votes. Afterwards, "The Bengal Primary Education Act" was promulgated in 1919 to make primary education compulsory in urban areas. In 1930, "The Bengal (Rural) Primary Education Act" was enacted to make primary education compulsory in rural areas. A plan to implement compulsory primary education in East Bengal was published in 1952. The East Pakistan Education Commission 1957, National Education Commission 1950, Dr. Khudrat-E-Khuda Commission 1974, the Advisory Council for Education in 1979, and Mafiz Commission, 1988 gave due importance to and recommend compulsory primary edu-

cation. But unfortunately, none of these decisions, plans and recommendations was materialised for different reasons.

In Bangladesh to achieve the goals of 'Education for All (EFA) by the year 2000'. The Primary Education (Compulsory) Act, 1990' was promulgated in Bangladesh National Assembly in 1990 and primary education was made compulsory. The provisions of this law are as follows: (1) the government, by gazette notification, can make primary education compulsory in any area of the country from any time it desires. (2) the guardians of the children shall have to admit their children in the nearest primary schools, if they do not have any reasonable ground not to do so.

Under this law, the responsibilities and duties of different primary education committees have also been delineated. In each ward, committee will be formed to look after the matters relating to admission and attendance of children in the primary schools. Besides, the circulars published in accordance with the Primary Education (Compulsory) Act have also directed to form committee at district, thana, pourashava and union levels and these committees are also given specific duties and responsibilities. Local public representatives, persons interested in education, elites of the area and field level government officers are included in these committees. The present democratic government made primary education compulsory in 68 thanas in 1992. In these 68 thanas, the admission as well

as attendance rate has increased remarkably. It has been observed that the rate of admission has gone up to 65.07%. In another survey, conducted by the UNICEF, it is shown that there is no 6+ left-out in the 30% catchment areas of the country and only 9% children is remained left-out in 70% of the catchment areas of the country. The regular attendance of the children in the school has been increased upto 70% on average.

The government has made primary education compulsory in all the thanas of the country from the current academic session. The success achieved in the previous year has encouraged the government to take this bold steps. Different circulars and notifications have been sent to the concerned offices and to different committees. The propaganda is going on throughout the country to make primary education compulsory programme a success. Meetings, seminars, symposiums, and workshops are being held. Propaganda messages, songs, spots and short dramas are being transmitted through radio, television and other mass media.

It has become imperative to increase the social awareness and to organise and galvanize the social mobilisation movement with a view to making primary education programme a success. To materialise it, participation of local representatives, social workers, elites of the area and the services of different cultural and voluntary organisations in the social mobilisation process is taken into active consideration.