

EDUCATION IN MOTHER LANGUAGE

'Include indigenous issue in upcoming edn policy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday urged the government to include the issue of primary education of the indigenous children in their mother language in the upcoming education policy to ensure their education rights.

As the mother language of the ethnic communities is not Bangla, the language and content of the textbooks is not familiar to their cultural circumstances, they said, adding that to spread the light of education among the indigenous people there is no alternative to imparting education in their mother tongue.

The speakers stressed the need for forming a taskforce or working group or caucus comprising experts immediately to work on the issue.

The national seminar titled 'Basic education in mother tongue for the ethnic minority children' was organised jointly by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), Gonoshasthya Kendra, Karitas, Save the Children Alliance, Brac, Bangladesh

Adivasi Forum and three other NGOs at LGED Bhaban in the city.

In his keynote paper, Dr Sourav Sikder, chairperson of the Department of Linguistics, Dhaka University, said around 25 lakh indigenous people of 45 indigenous communities living in the country are lagging behind in many sectors especially the indigenous children are deprived of basic education rights.

"Since the existing syllabus of the national curriculum and textbook are in Bangla it is not at all scientific for the indigenous children, he added.

Lack of adequate schools and teachers, lingual obstacles, discriminatory behaviour of the teachers, Bangalee classmates and lack of awareness, financial constraints and lack of specific initiatives are obstacles to the advancement of the indigenous children, he said.

The goal of education for all will not be achieved without prioritising indigenous children's primary education, he said, adding, "We have to adopt a national plan

in light of the concerned strategies and policies to ensure education for all children of the country."

He suggested building schools in every indigenous village, taking initiatives to impart primary education in the mother languages, preparing textbooks in indigenous languages, appointing indigenous teachers and allocating adequate fund in the upcoming budget.

Urging the government to include the issue in the national education policy, Secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum Sanjib Drong said forming a taskforce or working group or caucus is a must to deal with the issue.

Lawmaker Rashed Khan Menon, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on education, urged all to incorporate the government and other stakeholders into the non-government initiatives for the development of the indigenous community.

Rasheda K Chowdhury, former adviser to a caretaker government, presided over the seminar while lawmaker Promod Mankin also spoke.