



# The Bangladesh Times

# PRIMARY SCHOOL DROPOUTS

A news story run by this paper Tuesday last about dropouts in primary schools in the country might make the concerned quarters uneasy. The picture it paints is based on official documents. The commitment for universal primary education has been there for quite some time and it has been getting high priority in the development plans. But resource constraints, shortage of trained teachers, inadequate physical facilities and above all lack of proper attitude have made the task too difficult.

The Education Commission headed by Dr. Kudrat-e-Khuda recommended (1974) to make education from grade I to V, then available free, as compulsory by 1980 and education up to grade VIII free and compulsory by 1983. We are today nowhere near the recommended target for 1980 what to say of 1983.

There has of course been progress meanwhile. The administration of primary education has been strengthened with the establishment of a directorate for primary education and appointment of Assistant Upazila Education Officers. The physical facilities improved with establishment of new schools, expansion of class rooms, arrangements of water supply and toilet and distribution of text books and uniform among the students. The training of teachers had also had attention.

The continuation of the high rate of dropout, however, indicate social attitude. This has more to do in the expansion of education and removal of illiteracy than mere physical facilities. Besides the utility of having older children around to help elders in the poorer farming families in desperate economic situation also saps all interest for educating children. It is difficult to make any dent in illiterate families without bringing about social changes.

The latest Ministry of Education document reveal not more than a third of the students enrolled in grade I of primary schools complete the five year course. The World Bank statistics last year said only 23 per cent of the primary students could reach the fifth grade. It said one-third of the students of the first grade were easily discouraged by the overcrowded class rooms and inadequate teaching. An earlier joint study conducted by Unicef and Unesco showed that the dropout rate was almost 80 per cent till 1980.

The annual dropout rate, according to official sources, was 22 per cent in 1985; it came down to 18 in 1986 and to 13.18 in 1987. A survey conducted in November

to accommodate 4000 spectators. Besides, the swimming pool will have players' facility, VIP facility, media facility and parking facility. The pool will be constructed in the south eastern side of the National Stadium No. 2. It will be 23 metre high and will have cable truss supported fabric roof. The President said like personal and political philosophy sports had its own philosophy conducted in November.