

গড়িল ... 2 1 MAY 2003
পৃষ্ঠা ... কলাম ... ১

Education In A Shambles

Whoever could ever imagine a situation where colleges at the degree level are ready to welcome students (freshers) with open arms but no one is interested to seek admission to many of those colleges? But this is exactly the case in Bangladesh. Against 2,60,000 seats in such educational institutions, there are only 1,45,818 eligible candidates at the degree level. Of the eligible candidates, about 5,000 go abroad for higher education every year. Which means more than 1,14,000 seats in such colleges will lie vacant. A similar picture has emerged from the admission test at the degree level under the National University. As many as 12,000 seats remained vacant because not adequate number of candidates qualified for admission. Last year also 8,000 seats were left vacant under the same university.

Even a few years back the situation was different. Then what has happened in the meantime that the degree colleges are running short of students? The way general education was losing its relevance simply indicated that such a thing was going to happen today or tomorrow. Then a few injudicious decisions by the authorities prompted this to happen. Politics of convenience also played a part here. Colleges were given permission to offer degree-level education (both pass course and honours) without taking into consideration their infrastructure and the staff strength. It was more like opening shops without considering the demand for commodities or who might be the potential customers.

No denying the fact that till today competition at reputed colleges and universities is intense and the very best try their luck either at these institutions or abroad. But then this does not adequately explain the obtaining reality in our education sector. One must look at the percentages of pass at the secondary and higher secondary levels. The supply line there is alright but the quality of products is questionable. More than 60 per cent are not upto the mark and are therefore rejected. So the number of admission seekers is fewer than the seats at the tertiary level. Both quality and infrastructure at this level too are questionable.

Yet this should not be a cause for concern. What should really set the alarm bell ringing is the precipitous fall of quality of education at the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels. It is exactly at these levels that the tone of a country's education is set. Presumably all primary, high schools and colleges offer similar, if not the same, education. Syllabi at each of these levels are more or less same. But then the quality of education received by students at different educational facilities varies widely. It varies from village to town to city and also within each of these locations. Today the top educational agenda ought to be bringing about uniformity in the standard of education at the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels. Unless the gap can be bridged, there is no hope of receiving adequate number of qualified students for the tertiary level of education. No doubt, the whole education system needs a shake-up. Education must be need-based first of all. No point producing graduates who, on the one hand, are worldly unwise and on the other, way behind in technical, scientific and even moral and creative knowledge. Let education be equal to the demand of the time in all respects. Only then it will be the first national priority.