

Fresh admission quota in private schools uncalled for

THE introduction of some new enrolment quotas, including a 2 per cent quota for members of the parliament, to all the non-government educational institutions across the country in defiance of protests on part of guardians and educationists, is simply unacceptable. Already, in all such type of institutions, 5 per cent seats are reserved for the children and grandchildren of freedom fighters, while 2 per cent more is set aside for the physically and mentally challenged students. Now, as New Age reported on Monday, quoting discussions in a meeting held in the education ministry on Sunday, in addition to all this, the government is going to introduce a 2 per cent quota each for members of the parliament and the children of the officials of education boards and the secondary and higher education directorate insofar as enrolment in different private schools and colleges is concerned.

Surely, such a decision taking effect from the next session will further shrink the room for admission to these institutions on the basis of merit. Additionally, it may widen the scope of corruptions when it comes to admission, especially, to different posh institutions in the capital Dhaka and elsewhere in the country. Pertinently, with inadequate number of schools and colleges that deliver quality education in a city of almost one and a half crore residents, guardians usually make a beeline for getting their kids admitted into such institutions in the capital. Allegations have it that different influential quarters have so far hardly missed such occasions to cash in on.

The government is taking the step at a time when there is a growing public criticism against the prevailing quota system, particularly, in government jobs. Arguments are there that the existing government policy to set aside more than 50 per cent of total posts in civil services for some specific groups, compromising on merit, is significantly responsible for what is called underperformance of different government offices, including the administration, at different levels.

It is true that the quota system is quite effective in helping the underprivileged class to keep pace with others in their struggle to keep body and soul together in a country like ours which is crudely subjected to uneven development, social and economic, due to wrong policies pursued by successive governments since independence. As such, the constitution has rightly mandated the state to maintain a quota system for this population in different fields that include education and jobs. Undeniably, however, the steps in question to reserve seats for members of parliament or ministry officials in no way relate to those groups.

While the government is well advised to overhaul its policies quota in line with the constitution, the education ministry needs to give a second thought to introducing a fresh admission quota.