

Minister's resounding 'no' to reception *Sycophancy spurned, good example set*

OUR auditory nerves are often rattled by reports of sycophantic preparations made to receive an official dignitary on a routine visit to a place under his or her jurisdiction. Arches would be built, a colourful stage set up, school students lined up in sweltering heat for hours to greet a certain minister or a state minister on tour. All of these would have been arranged by closing schools for the day, maybe with a rest day following, and collecting subscription arbitrarily from schools to bear the cost of the august visit.

This is a throw-back to the feudal or colonial practices we thought we had discarded a long time ago in free and independent Bangladesh. But we are sadly mistaken by the surge in flattering adulations of people in high places even as we pride ourselves on our democratic credentials.

But one minister Bir Bahadur Ushwe, MP, in charge of primary education, would not have anything to do with such shamefully favour-seeking reception to be accorded to him entirely at others' expense. He refused to attend the programme in Bandarban saying that he strongly disapproved of the way this was arranged by 'closing so many schools' in the area. Each school had to contribute TK 1,000 to the programme. The teachers were required to sign up to their presence on the programme.

We hope and believe that the minister's example will not be lost on other dignitaries and that it will be replicated by them when faced with similar flattering designs at cost to their dignity and credibility.