

# Pressure of Admission Seekers Mounting in DU

Sohel Manzur

The number of students seeking admission to Dhaka University is increasing each year. But seats in its 36 departments are not increasing accordingly.

It is gathered that 43 thousand application forms were sold out by the University this year to admission seekers against only 3,692 seats. In 1990 the number of admission seekers was 39 thousand against 3,500 seats.

The number of applicants was 35 thousand against 3,500 seats in 1989.

In 1989 the University received 10 applications against each seat. In 1990 and 1991 the number of applications received against each seat were about 11 and 12 respectively.

In other words 90 per cent of the applicants return disappointed each year even though they have the requisite quali-

cations to get admitted to the University. The situation is the same in other universities and important colleges of the country.

In Dhaka University this year 13,455 students appeared in the admission test of 'Ka' unit (Science faculty) against eleven hundred seats. The number of units in other units were: 9,400 in 'Kha' (Arts faculty), 6,010 in 'Ga' (Commerce faculty) and 14,213 in 'Gha' units against 1,600, 650 and 475 seats respectively.

Candidates who want to get themselves admitted to Arts or Commerce faculties from Science group have to appear in the admission test of 'Gha' unit where the competition is the most tough.

A Dhaka University teacher told this correspondent that shortage of higher educational institutions is the main cause

of the heavy pressure of admission seekers. He says even though the population of Bangladesh and the number of Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) pass outs continued to increase the number of universities did not increase over the last 19 years of independence. But during the same period as many as 15 new universities have been established in Pakistan.

In Bangladesh out of three new universities that have been initiated over the last one decade only the Islamic University has started functioning partially. The Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet; and the Khulna University are still at the construction stage. Proper functioning of the Islamic University has been affected by repeated shifting of its site

since 1982. Thus the pressure on the existing universities is mounting. Dhaka University, the largest university in the country, is experiencing the maximum pressure.

The Dhaka University teacher said that sessions-jam is also straining the physical facilities of the universities preventing them from offering more seats.

It is gathered that the Dhaka University authorities have to accommodate about two extra batches of six thousand students due to sessions-jam. Students take six years to complete years of honours and master's courses.

According to him the pressure is higher also because the authorities have failed to attract students to honours pro-

grammes of University colleges by creating adequate facilities. Thus students from colleges affiliated to the University ultimately queue up at the University proper for admission.

Prof. Maniruzzaman Miah, Vice-Chancellor of the University told this reporter that seats in different departments of the University are not increased mainly due to lack of physical facilities.

He said there was shortage of laboratory and class-room space, and seats in the student-dormitories.

The DU Vice-Chancellor hoped that the problem might ease to some extent if the University succeeded in eliminating the problem of sessions-jam.



A student looking through a microscope in a lab in the science building of Dhaka University. —Star Photo

## Tips on Study Abroad: Courses Offered in USSR

Academic year: September to July

### University entrance

Foreign students seeking admission as undergraduates to universities and technical, medical and agricultural institutions in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (at which full course last 5 to 6 years) should be aged between 17 and 35 and should have completed secondary education. Postgraduate education studentships (lasting 3 to 4 years) are open to graduates of up to 35 years of age with master's degree and at least 2 years' practical experience in area of specialty.

Specialists and teachers who have completed their higher education may be admitted to advanced training and refresher course (lasting 1 or 2 years). Studentships and field work are regarded as individual forms of instruction. Preparatory courses (usually lasting 1 year) are available in

various universities to enable foreign students from different educational backgrounds to qualify for entrance to course in their chosen fields of study.

Applications for admission to courses (unless otherwise specified below) should be addressed to the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education USSR and submitted by 1 April of current year (for graduates) and by 15 March (for other students) through the candidate's government to the Soviet diplomatic representative in the country concerned.

### Application procedures

Foreign citizens are admitted to USSR educational institutions: (a) on the basis of inter-state agreements and plans for cultural and scientific co-operation between the USSR and foreign countries; (b) on scholarships allocated by the Soviet Union for the Council for Mutual Economic Aid (Comecon), the United Nations

Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other international organizations; (c) on scholarships allocated to the corresponding public foreign organizations by the following Soviet public organizations: All-Union Central Council of Trade Union, the USSR Youth Organizations Committee, the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, the Soviet-African Solidarity Committee, the Soviet Women's Committee, the Centrosouz (The Central Alliance of Consumer Societies of the USSR) and the Soviet Society for Cultural Relations with Compatriots Abroad (The Rodina Society).

The Patrice Lumumba People's Friendship University enrolls foreign students in accordance with the University

Charter.

### Language

Russian is the language of instruction. Preparatory courses in Russian are available at the universities of Moscow, Erevan, Irkutsk, Kiev, Khar'kov, Minsk, Voronez, Donetsk, Lvov, Kishinev and Tashkent. The Patrice Lumumba Friendship University, the Azerbaijan Institute of Oil and Chemistry Baku, the Leningrad Polytechnical Institute, the Moscow Highway Engineering Institute, the Kuban Agricultural Institute Krasnodar and the Medical Institute of Rostov, the Volgograd Polytechnical Institute, the Voronez Technological Institute, the Irkutsk Polytechnical Institute, the Kalinin Polytechnical Institute; the Rostov Institute of Agricultural Machine Constructing the Kiev Institute of Civil Engineering, the Odessa Polytechnical Institute, the Kharkov Polytechnical Institute, the First Medical

Institute of Leningrad, the Medical Institute of Vinnitsa, the Medical Institute of Zaporozie, the Kishinev Agricultural Institute, the Agricultural Academy of Byelorussia, the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Mechanization of Agriculture, the Agricultural Institute of Tajikistan, the Astrakhan Institute of Fish Technology Moscow State Conservatoire and the Kiev Institute of Civil Aviation Engineering.

Scholarship holders receive monthly allowances depending on the length of study plus free tuition and medical care, book allowances, fare back to home country (only for those who have successfully completed their studies) and warm-clothing allowances for foreign citizens arriving to attend courses lasting more than a year. Low-cost hostel accommodation is available to scholarship holders.

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## Retarded Children Discover Literacy

The plan is to have 3.2 million retarded children reach literacy level by year 2000 by Aixi.

With an IQ (Intelligence Quotient) between 75 and 50, according to Zhang Tianlun, the principal.

Medical experts say in China those whose IQ ranged from 75 downward are considered retarded. (The average IQ is about 100.) Those at the low end of the scale cannot take care of themselves and need special care. But the others can be educated to some extent, with care and patience.

Before admission, the retarded children are interviewed by teachers to see if they can speak properly, count figures or identify colours. The children also take an IQ test.

"Special education" in China aims at making the retarded self-sufficient and able to hold jobs within their capacity. Thus, most special schools offer vocational courses such as tailoring, weaving and machine embroidery.

Upon graduation last year, the students of the Xi Cheng

special school received a medical checkup, which showed that their IQ increased an average of five points compared with their IQ upon entering the school.

The checkup showed that the students have made greater achievement in body coordination and self-care than in speaking ability. Teacher said this is because China does not have suitable teaching materials for language improvement.

In China, teachers help students with difficulties in speech by teaching them to recite tongue twisters and doggerel, said Cai Wen, the teaching director.

Though years of special education have taught the students some basic skills such as sewing and embroidery, factories are reluctant to employ them. This is because, some factory directors say, of the possible troubles that they may cause outweigh the contribu-

tion they make to the factories. It was with some prodding from the Beijing Municipal Government that some garment factories handed out job offers last year for the Xicheng school's first batch of graduates, according to Principal Zhang.

Gu Peng and his classmates should consider themselves lucky, as they are the few who have an opportunity to receive special education.

According to Wang Zhu, an official with the Special Education Department of the State Education Commission, China has 10.17 million mentally retarded people, four million of them between the ages seven and 15. Special schools can only accommodate 20,000 mentally retarded children.

The majority, mostly in the rural areas, receive no education.

Those who are kept out of school are much of a burden to their families. For example, Qin Yan, Gu Peng's mother, used to lock her son up at home because there was nobody to look after him.

This, she said, only made his condition worse. Otherwise, she took him to work, which did not solve the problem, because he was in the way.

—Depthnews Asia

## Illiteracy in Developed Countries

By Jean-Pierre Velis

AS the twentieth century draws to a close, in the so-called industrialized countries, reading, writing and arithmetic, the three universally-accepted components of literacy, are considered normal skills that everyone must master. Especially since in these countries schooling is generally compulsory and free, and sometimes has been so for more than a century, and it is the duty of the school to teach these skills. It would seem in conceivable that a person who has attended school for many years should be unable to read on reaching adulthood, especially in societies where the written word is practically indispensable to everyday survival. The general reaction to the existence of illiteracy is one of amazement and incredulity.

### Recent revelation

To be illiterate in a country where for several decades there has been a struggle against illiteracy is a far worse handicap than it is in a country where illiteracy is the general rule. In industrialized societies the illiterate are the victims of an unusual form of segregation which often causes them to feel ashamed. And since they tend to conceal their existence, it was a long time before they were noticed. Was this oversight deliberate or unconscious?

It was in the early 1970s that illiteracy suddenly reappeared as public issue in the industrialized countries. In 1972 the British people were astonished to discover, from the findings of a small charitable organization, the British Association of Settlements, that between 7 and 10 per cent of adolescents aged sixteen or more were barely able to stumble through a simple text when they left school, and that there were some two million illiterate people in the United Kingdom, not counting immigrants.

This revelation was important for several reasons. It was the first time people realized the full extent of a phenomenon that was far from marginal. (Over the next fifteen years, many industrialized countries produced official or unofficial estimates of a comparable order of grandeur). Secondly, a campaign to make public opinion aware of the problem launched by the BBC programme On the Move and

the government measures to which it gave rise (such as the creation of an agency for adult literacy), have often been taken as models. Finally, this revelation encouraged reflection on the concept of illiteracy and its persistence in wealthy societies that are proud of their culture and their record of school attendance.

### Another form of illiteracy

There have always been illiterates in the industrialized countries, but the public has not always been aware of their existence, and their numbers gradually declined to the point where they were statistically negligible. As schooling has become more widespread and education has become more democratic, their numbers have constantly decreased in recent decades while the general level of education has risen. So is this a question of much ado about nothing?

These illiterate people are adults who have attended school and have had some contact with reading and writing. They may know the alphabet and even be just about capable of deciphering a few words. They may be able to write a little. They may recognize figures and be able to do a few sums, but their knowledge in these fields is rudimentary and insufficient for them to cope easily with everyday life. They are not totally illiterate, but they are illiterate in the context of the society in which they live. For this reason the term most frequently used to describe their situation is "functional illiteracy", a relative notion the content of which may vary widely at different times, in different countries and even in different regions.

These functional illiterates are not a recent phenomenon. A specific form of illiteracy has arisen in contemporary Western societies in which structural developments in employment have resulted in requirement for higher levels of training and qualification.

In rural societies where there are large numbers of manual and unskilled jobs, the illiterate managed to achieve social and professional integration. This is no longer possible in industrialized societies whose economies in the final decade of the twentieth century are increasingly dependent on the services sector. The large-scale disappearance of unskilled jobs, together with

the constant rise in the qualification required, is leaving functional illiterates behind. Whenever a firm reduces its staff, closes down or introduces new technologies, workers hitherto considered competent and efficient are devalued, incapable of being retrained because their reading, writing and calculation skills are inadequate. Labelled as "functional illiterates", they find themselves queuing up in employment agencies or receiving some form of public assistance.

It is not surprising that functional illiteracy should have been rediscovered in the early 1970s—the time of the first oil crisis, the beginning of the world economic crisis and the spectacular rise in unemployment, especially among young people.

It soon became clear that there was a close correlation between poverty and illiteracy, though it was not possible to unravel cause and effect. Hence the battle against illiteracy from the beginning has been seen as an activity with social and humanitarian connotations.

A number of countries have sought the help of voluntary workers—mothers willing to give their free time or retired people—on the principle that people who know how to read, write and count should be able to pass on their knowledge, if only for a few hours a week, to those who do not. Unfortunately there have been many disappointments and setbacks. Lack of method, teaching materials suitable only for immigrants, the absence of training facilities for voluntary teachers, have led even the most enthusiastic to despair. In addition, even today, financial resources are often insufficient, and support from the authorities is often half-hearted. Where adult illiterates are concerned, help has almost always come from voluntary associations supported by social workers. Some twenty years on, apart from a few notable exceptions such as the Netherlands and Portugal, the situation is still unchanged.

### More than an economic challenge

Initially viewed as an educational problem closely linked to mechanisms of social discrimination, functional illiteracy in the late 1980s became

the centre of an alarmist economic scenario. In North America it has been the subject of a number of reports and studies whose conclusions have been voiced by political leaders and industrialists swayed by the simple argument that illiteracy is expensive both for companies and for the nation as a whole. The estimated direct cost of illiteracy to the business world in Canada is some C\$4 billion. It could actually be higher, since the total loss to Canadian society is estimated, as the very least, to amount to C\$10 billion a year. Functional illiteracy is expensive today and tomorrow will be even more so since in the long term it weakens a country's competitiveness on the world economic market.

A US Congressman has declared that "Members of Congress are beginning to understand that, as a matter of fact, illiteracy is going to determine whether we are competitive or not competitive in the years to come."

And so measures to solve the problem cannot be left exclusively to voluntary workers.

A firm commitment from governments is required. The time is clearly past when the government could look on while the voluntary organizations took charge of the problem of illiteracy. The Canadian Prime Minister stated in 1987 when he announced that his government would be investing C\$110 million over a five-year period in an attempt to solve the problem. In the same vein, the French Secretary of State for Professional Training, speaking in 1989, stressed that "the scale of the task calls for a veritable national crusade."

I intend to ensure that training activities designed to combat functional illiteracy are rid of the secretive atmosphere in which they are all too often shrouded and become one of the main concerns of the training schemes introduced for people whose low standards of knowledge currently exclude them from the labour market... this campaign is all the more pressing since such exclusion is a threat to progress and spells the rum of development in the long run. It is economically necessary for us to win the battle and it would be socially unjust not to fight it."



Students of primary level participating in a handwriting contest held recently at the National Museum. —Star Photo