

Spirit of Ekushey Lives On



Dhaka Day by Day

The State of Literacy

by S. Bari

Other nations honour their dead, their victories, their founders; Bangladesh is possibly the only country to set aside a day in honour of its language. More than 40 years after speaking Bangla became a basic right. What is the state of the language in the only country in the world where it is a state language?

Less than a fifth of our citizens can read and write their mother tongue. Of the official 22 per cent who are literate, a large proportion are barely so. It is one thing to recognize letters; it is another to string them together and understand the message. Literacy has been high on the list of proclaimed priorities of successive governments, but basic education is more than mere words. Money is required; money that is irresistibly drawn to bureaucratic black holes.

Education has an image problem as well. A generation ago, teaching was highly respected, if poorly paid. Today, paragons of success for the younger generation are often people who have paid less attention to education than to making money the fast way. Unless getting an education can offer a more secure life than, say, gold smuggling, no one will be particularly interested in it. It's time to give literacy a makeover: in the age of the consumer, it's time to advertise education.

The present administration's Universal Primary Education plan is a well-meant if somewhat floundering effort in that direction. Obstacles on the way include the problem of the bureaucratic black hole: mismanagement is a beast that self-propagates. Secondly, these children just don't seem to stay in school!

Here is where experts suggest the government take a helping hand from bodies it has traditionally had a less-than-fraternal relationship with: non-governmental organizations. BRAC's non-formal primary education programme has won applause from the four corners of the world, and more importantly, from the kids right here at home. Over 6000 schools are bringing literacy and numeracy to 200,000 village children: By 1997, they plan to have 100,000 schools. Hardly anyone drops out, because, as student Selma Akhter ex-

plains, "We have fun." One of the main reasons children drop out of government schools is parents finding the subject matter irrelevant. NGOs have curricula that mean something to the rural child. A Sylhet-based organization, Friends in Village Development Bangladesh, produces literacy teaching material that talks frankly about bad crops, poverty, hygiene, and equality for women.

BRAC schoolchildren and their parents decide the hours for class, so that students can still work in the fields and around the house. This ensures that potential students are not

forced to drop out due to the economic pressures at home. While convenient hours and interesting material help the school keep its students, the impetus from home is the all-deciding factor. Most rural parents want their children to read and write, but chances of a child staying in school are higher if the mother is educated. Just as economists find an earning woman benefits the family more directly than a man, educationists now know a mother's education has more influence on her children than their father's.

In a recent evaluation by a UNICEF-led team, findings suggest that the main weakness of the government plan is inefficient monitoring and evaluation. BRAC schools are surprised with frequent unannounced visits from a supervisor. BRAC is currently developing a rapid evaluation method that will allow a faster assessment of progress than has so far been possible. Government schools are notoriously neglected when it comes to statistics, and this method will hopefully lead to clearer information on student achievement.

Hundreds of government-built slogan-plastered cement monstrosities do the countryside in the name of universal education. NGOs save money by renting huts from villagers to house schools. If we manage our money, and plan as carefully as these success stories have, the dilapidated village schoolrooms will awaken to young voices. More people will read and write, and Ekushey will be every day.



যত্ন করে হাঁস মুরগী
রক্ষা করা যায়।

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A page from FIVDB's basic education workbook.

85 pc small farmers deprived of institutional sources' credit

Experts at a seminar on "Bank and Agricultural Development" yesterday said nearly 85 percent of country's small farmers had no access to institutional sources of credit, reports UNB.

According to them, only 1.2 percent of the farmers who own land upto 1 acre receive loans from institutional sources while the vast majority is forced to go to non-institutional ones like greedy rural money lenders.

Small farmers access to loan from Bangladesh Krishi Bank and NCB's is limited, as their credit is disbursed on the basis of land ownership

and collateral security which the small farmers cannot provide, they said.

The speakers, including agriculture experts, academics, bankers from various government, national and private organisations, called for strengthening local government institutions and introducing special rural branches of Nationalised Commercial Banks to gear up rural credit activity for agricultural development.

Existing rural credit institutions and programmes, in most cases, have proved ineffective for removing the constraints in improving the con-

dition of small farmers, they observed.

AHM Nurul Islam Chowdhury, Director General of Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management, presided over the seminar where 11 papers were presented in two sessions on various aspects of bank and its role in agricultural development.

Prof M Lutfor Rahman from Agriculture University, in his paper titled "Agricultural Production and Financing by Banks in Bangladesh", said despite increase in farm credit, farmers could hardly derive its benefit due to non-availability of credit in right time and in right amount.

AHM Nurul Islam Chowdhury, in a paper, called for the NCBs to be more dynamic in handling agricultural credit with enough financial resources.

Speakers also urged for lowering interest charges, specially for the poor.



Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali addressing the 16th death anniversary programme of Editor Abdus Salam at the Jatiya Grantha Kendra auditorium yesterday. — Star photo

JU students observe token strike

By JU Correspondent

Students of the Jahangirnagar University observed a token strike yesterday in protest against the recent killing in the Rajshahi University.

Classes and scheduled examinations were suspended in accordance with the strike called by the All Party Students Unity (APSU) and the central students body of the university JUCSU.

Nurul Momen's death anniversary today

The third death anniversary of Natyaguru Professor Nurul Momen, a noted dramatist and essayist will be observed today, says a press release.

He got the Bangla Academy, Ekushey Padak, Nasruddin, Sitara-i-Imtiaz, Mejid-al-Makki, Tenashinas, Theatre group awards.

'Natyaguru Professor Nurul Momen Foundation' will arrange a discussion meeting today on his life and works. Eminent intellectuals of the country will speak on the occasion.



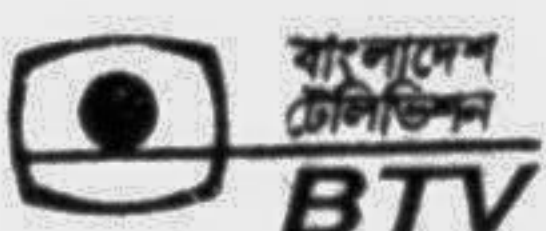
Obituary

Shafiqur Rahman, Chairman and Managing Director of Chandpur Jute Balers Ltd., leading exporter of Raw Jute and Director of Eastland Insurance Co. Ltd., died of Lung Cancer on Saturday last at a Cancer Clinic in Mexico, says a press release.

His body is expected to arrive at Zia International Airport, today at 4:30 pm by British Airways.

The Namaz-e-Janaza of Shafiqur Rahman will be held tomorrow at Lalmatia Jam-e-Masjid (Block-C) after Johar prayer and later at Baitul Mukarram Mosque after Aaar prayer.

He will be buried at Banani Graveyard immediately after the Janaza.



Tuesday

5.00	Opening announcement
	Al-Quran Programme summary
5.25	Esho Pari Likhi
6.00	Mayeder Jonnya
7.05	Open University
8.00	News in Bangla
8.40	New Drama Series: Surjer Apekkhay
10.00	News in English
10.30	Film show: E N G
11.30	Khabar/The News
11.40	Tomorrow's programme summary
11.45	Closing

Weather

Night temperature may not change

By Staff Correspondent

Rain and shower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi division and the regions of Mymensingh, Tangail, Comilla and Sylhet during the next 36 hours commencing 6 pm yesterday.

Meteorological office forecasts weather will remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period.

The sun sets today (Tuesday) in Dhaka at 5-54 pm and rises tomorrow (Wednesday) at 6-30 am.

Temperature and humidity recorded in important cities and towns on Monday were:

Cities/Towns	Temperature in degree Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	9 am	6 pm
Dhaka	30.3	22.0	82	52
Chittagong	27.0	19.4	81	72
Rajshahi	29.4	13.5	98	68
Khulna	32.4	18.0	80	49
Barisal	31.2	21.6	95	70
Cox's Bazar	28.0	19.5	79	80
Sylhet	24.6	18.0	98	73
Dinajpur	27.2	18.2	88	72

Tk 155 cr WB, ADB project loan spent, JS told

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday told the Jatiya Sangsad that an estimated amount of Tk 155 crore has been spent till December 1992 out of a total commitment of Taka 4,412 crore project loan from World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Mirza Azam (AL-Jamalpur), the Finance Minister said, till December 1992 from the time the government came to power, the World Bank committed a project loan of Taka 2,170 equivalent to US dollars 556 million and the ADB Taka 2242 crore equivalent to US dollars 575 million.

The committed project loans from World Bank and ADB will be spent over a period of five to seven years for implementation of the assigned projects, the Finance Minister said.

Replying to a supplementary question from Gonatantry Party leader Suranjit Sen Gupta, the Finance Minister said that Bangladesh accept such loans which match with the development vision of the country.

In Memoriam

On the occasion of the 16th Death Anniversary of late Khan Bahadur Mujibur Rahman, a Milad Mahfil will be held today, the 16th February, 1993, at CEN (H)-13, Road No. 109, Gulshan, Dhaka at 4.30 P.M.

All relatives and friends are invited. Would those who are unable to attend, please offer a special prayer for his departed soul.

Family of Late Khan Bahadur Mujibur Rahman

CATALOGUE EXHIBITION ON INDUSTRIAL MACHINERY

February 17-18, 1993

Venue : Shilpa Bank Bhaban (5th Floor) Rajuk Avenue, Dhaka

Time : February 17 — 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
February 18 — 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Welcome to the Catalogue Exhibition on local and imported machinery and raw materials organised for the first time in Bangladesh.



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