

Feature

Education

Situation of Women's Education in Bangladesh : A Glimpse

It is a tragic reality that as we approach the twenty first century, we find that the basic issues of poverty, illiteracy and inequality still remain unresolved in many Least Development Countries including Bangladesh.

One of the stark realizations of the century in many third world countries is also women's inferior status due to their systematized exclusion from the development spectrum. The age long negation has relegated women to a much subordinated status, a by-passed even an oppressed entity in male dominated societies.

Fortunately gender issues have recently surfaced contemporary development strategies in many countries. Although much has been talked about women still much less has been done for them to ameliorate situation. A major determinant of development and socio-economic transformation is education. Education is a fundamental right of the people and a major constitutional obligation of the government of Bangladesh. Education is an instrument of human capital formation, a vehicle of social transformation. Education for both boys and girls, men and women are vitally important for development, but education for girls and women is specifically significant because they are the largest segment of the society, if kept backward, the development becomes grotesque and absurd. Female education level is not only a yardstick of development but it is also an indicator of measuring the ability of a nation as to how best its total resources have been mobilized and maneuvered towards progress and social transformation. As half of humanpower, women from a singular, formidable workforce to attain among other things, the national goals of self reliance, alleviation of poverty, food autarky, "education and health for all" by the year 2000.

Empirical studies in Costa Rica, Sri Lanka, Bostwana, Malaysia and South Korea have revealed that a judicious investment in women's education with a special thrust in primary education has reaped spectacular rewards.

From time immemorial women in Bangladesh have suffered a neglected status. They

have been systematically bypassed from all development efforts through decades. Education sector has not been an exception to this distressingly inequitable situation of women in all tiers of educational coverage.

Literacy ratio among men and women in Bangladesh is one of the lowest in the world — but female literacy in this part of the world, has always been half-way through the male literacy in all census data starting from 1901 till to date. At present, average male literacy is 32% and female literacy is 16%. The rural female literacy is about 10% which again may be seen as an exaggerated figure. It is presumed that in the face of existing socio-cultural norms, such ratio (rural female literacy) may not be above 3-4%. But in a functional sense most rural women may be categorized as virtually illiterates. Because due to a lack of follow-up, most rural literates relapse into illiteracy. They are to be termed as neo-literates.

An analysis of literacy situation among adults shows that the literacy figures rose from 9 million in 1974 to 13 million in 1981. The number of illiterates grew from 27 million to 33 million in the corresponding period, an increase of almost 20%. According to another estimate the total number of illiterates was about 70 million in 1989. Gender differential in literacy was also very high. It was found that for every 250 male literates there were only 100 female literates aged 5 years and above.

Out of a total of 55.81 million illiterates in 1981, 29.28 million were females. The female literacy improvement was 1.2% in urban areas and 0.3% in rural areas. With this rate of improvement, by the run of the century 80% of the females in Bangladesh will remain illiterates.

These facts among other things indicate that unless special policy interventions are made, increasing number of female illiterates threatens the whole system.

Issues Related to Women's Education
Education in Bangladesh is characterized by low enrollment, low retention and high drop out ratios for both sexes, at all levels. Education system has proved to be "dysfunctional" both qualitatively and quantitatively for both sexes.

But the benefits of education have not been evenly distributed between sexes and discrimination has been pronounced between the urban — rural divides. Recent data indicates that girls constitute about 44% of the Primary, 11% of the Secondary and 1% in the High Educational enrollment. The plausible explanation to such inequitable and low participation of girls among other things, despite policy rhetorics is due to the "historical, institutionalized cumulative inequalities" pertaining to women. It is a historical fact that women and girls in Bangladesh have been subjected to discrimination irre-

spective of class distinctions. Such deprivation of women folk has been historical and institutionalized as the institutions of patriarchy, marriage, in addition to socio-cultural values, religious norms which have cumulatively disadvantaged women through centuries. Patriarchy and its ideology have predominating influences in the governance of statecraft and administration of public affairs including the education sector.

threat to socio-economic survival.
Implication of Women's Education for Development
Education of women has positive implications both at the micro and macro lands of development. Education to women provides the catalytic power to fortify them against many odds. An educated women has the capability to develop skill, cultivate intellect for steering through economic development. Women's education and knowledge help them with the bargaining capacity and negotiating skills for eliminating the economic and commercial ex-

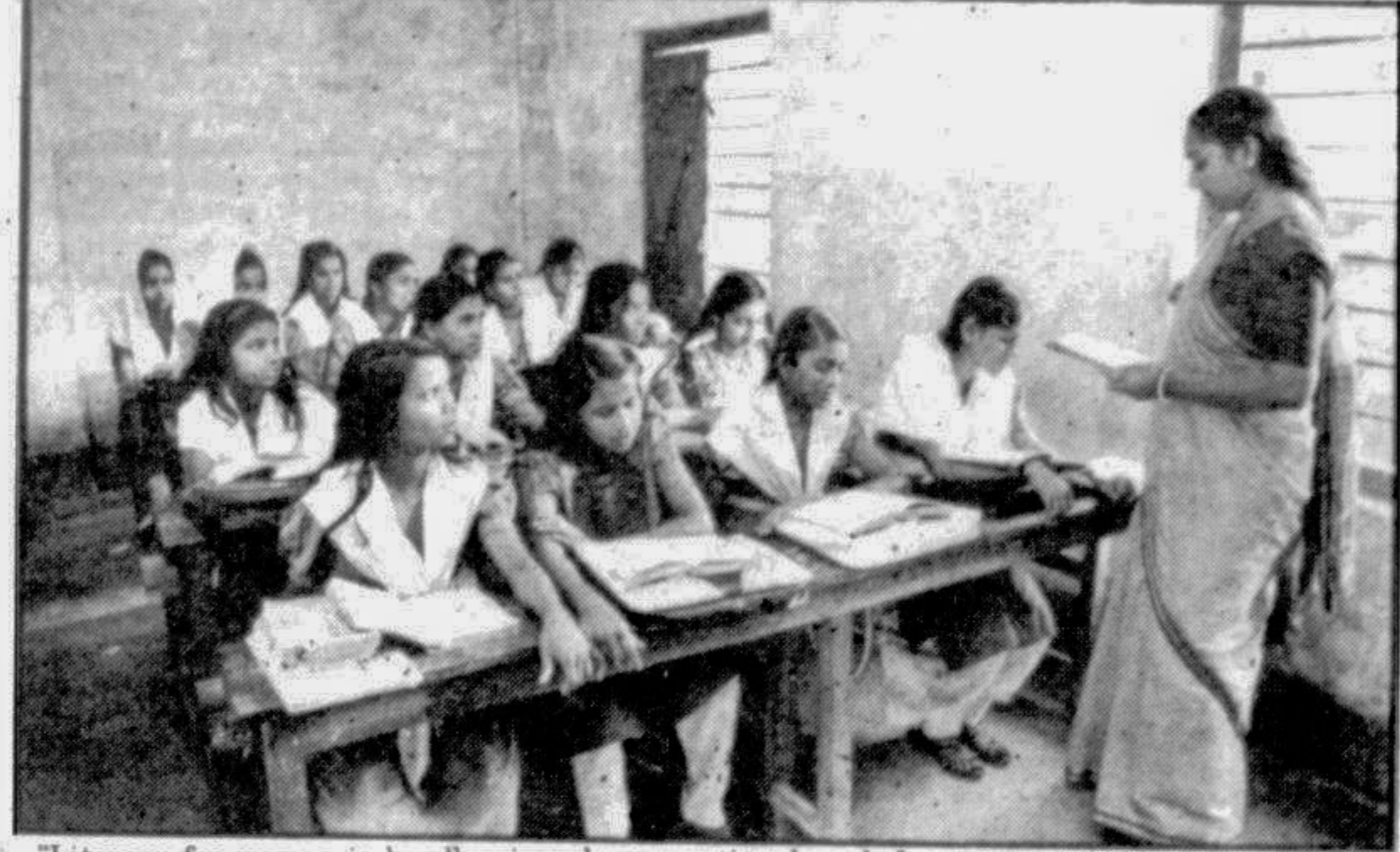
ploration of a growing market economy. Women's education in a developing country can be particularly important for the genetic engineering for the sustenance of a healthy human race. Above all, women's education offers women with the acumen and social skills to steer through a transition and transformation from a dependable valueless segment to a valuable productive agent of the society.

Fortunately there has been a growing concern for social scientists, policy makers who are riddled with the huge negative results of substantial public investments. Such a state of affairs legitimately claims a through inquiry into the state of affairs with positive interventions. The gross neglect of women's education has led to high risks of massive illiteracy and educational bankruptcy, women's lower enrollment, higher drop out, among other things jeopardizes productivity and is a

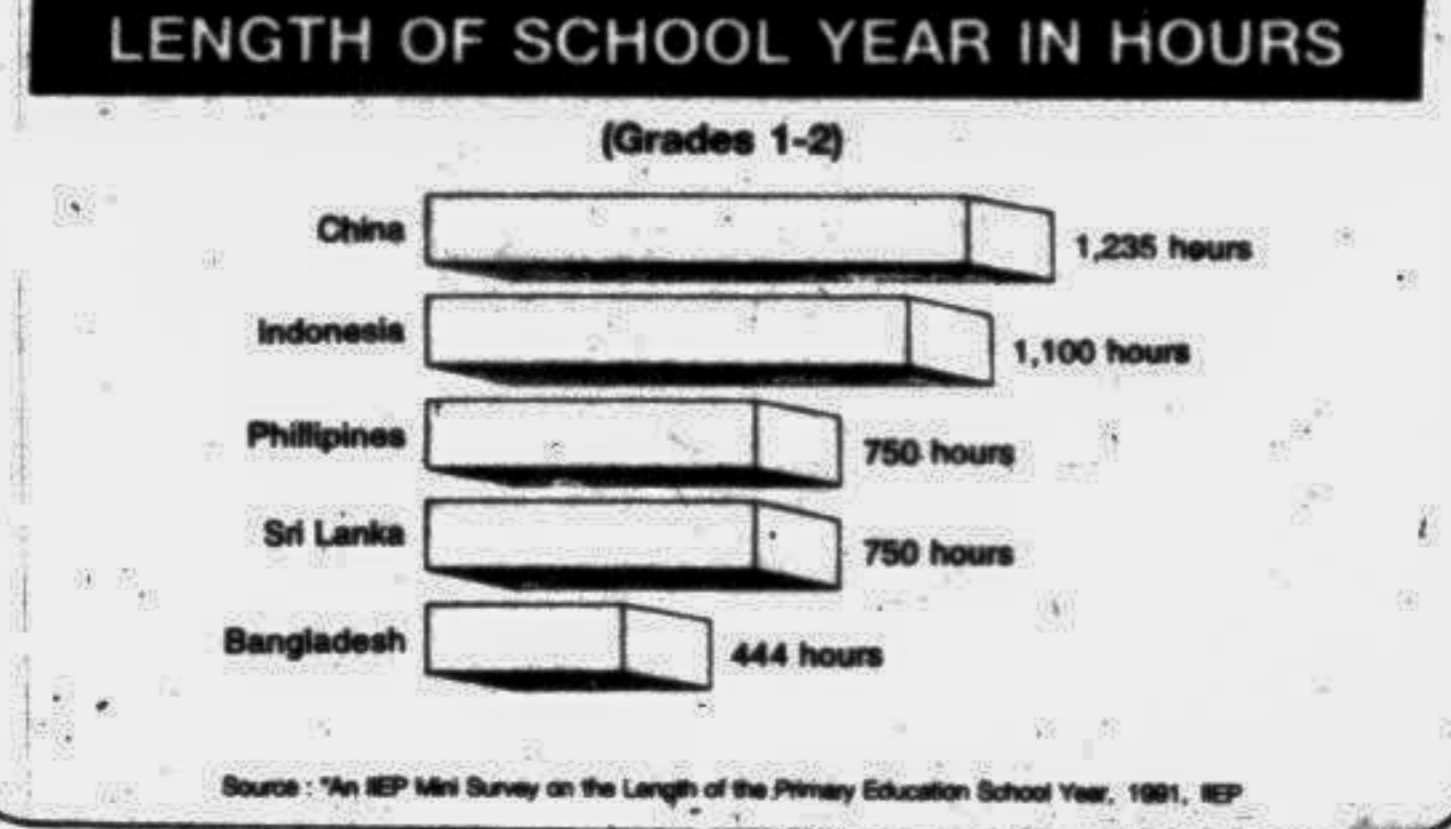
Women's education has been phenomenal in arresting population in many Asian and African Countries.

Women's education is also vital for sheer economic survival. Because in the face of poverty, environmental degradation and, pollution and crises, it is the women who along with their children are the foremost victims, have to survive, adjust, improvise and fight destitution, environmental degradation and destruction.

Women's education and knowledge help them with the bargaining capacity and negotiating skills for eliminating the economic and commercial ex-



"Literacy for women is hardly viewed as a national goal. In most cases they betray ignorance of women's potentialities." Yet studies carried out in 200 countries indicate that nations investing heavily in educating girls enjoy lower infant mortality, longer life expectancy, better nutritional education and fewer births. —Shehzad Noorani



Source: 'An IEP Mini Survey on the Length of the Primary Education School Year, 1991, IEP'

Selected Facts, Goals and Strategies

Primary Education

- Primary education consists of a five year cycle corresponding to 6-10 years age group.
- The average school size is 260 students.
- On an average, there is one teacher for fifty six students, and one supervisor to twenty teachers.
- Primary school operates in two shifts: one shift for Grades I and II for 2 hours, and a second shift for Grades III to V for 3 1/2 hours.

Summit Goals: Basic Education

- Universal access to basic education
- Completion of primary education by 80 per cent of relevant school age children
- Reduction of adult illiteracy rate by half of the 1990 level, with emphasis on female literacy
- Expansion of early childhood development activities

Bangladesh National Programme of Action Goals

- Increase access to basic education
- Increase the completion rate
- Reduce adult illiteracy
- Develop and expand an early childhood development programme

Enrollment in Primary Schools

- Gross enrollment rate in 1992 is approximately 79 per cent. About 20 per cent of children enrolled in primary schools are estimated to be under-and over-aged.
- The proportion of boys and girls enrollment in primary school is 55 to 45.
- The national target is to achieve 82 per cent gross enrollment in 1995 and 95 per cent in 2000.

Completion Rate

- To ensure completion of 5 year primary education is extremely important.
- In 1990, the completion rate was 35 per cent, i.e. 35 children out of 100 enrolled in Grade I complete the full cycle of primary education.
- The national target is to raise the completion rate to 52 per cent by 1995 and 70 per cent by 2000. Note that Summit target is 80 per cent completion.

Adult Literacy

- In 1990, the literacy rate for the adult population (15) was about 31 per cent.
- The national target is to increase the adult literacy rate to 40 per cent by 1995 and to 62 per cent by 2000.
- The female literacy rate is about half of the male literacy rate. Hence, there is a strong need to promote female literacy programmes.

Total Instructional Hours

- The length of the school year decides how much a child can learn.
- In the early grades (I and II), the total instructional hours per year is only 444 hours, which is very low compared to other Asian countries.

Achievement of Basic Education

- Only a little more than one-third of children completing primary education have achieved basic competencies (reading, writing, numeracy and functional skills).
- The achievement level of rural children is much lower than that of urban children.

Primary Education Budget

- The allocation to primary education is 48.73 per cent of the total budget allocated to education.
- GOB spends 14.25 per cent of the total 1993-94 allocation on education.
- Education allocation of GNP is 1.9 per cent

Govt Primary School Public Costs

- The largest portion of primary education expenditure goes to teachers' salaries and benefits.
- Only 1 per cent goes to training, provision of teaching aids and supervision.

Star Special

Computer

VLSI Conference in India

by Rathindra Nath Sanyal
The Seventh International Conference on Very Large Scale Integration (VLSI) design was held in Calcutta from January 5-8, 1994. The conference was sponsored by the VLSI Society of India (VSI) and Department of Electronics, Government of India in cooperation with Association for Computer Machinery (ACM), Special Interest Group on Design Automation (SIGDA), IEEE Circuits and Systems Society and IEEE Computer Society, DATC, VLSI-TC. Joseph B Costello, president and chief executive officer of Cadence Design System Inc., USA was the Keynote Speaker. The members of the Steering Committee were Vishwan D Agrawal, AT&T Bell Laboratories, Murry Hill, USA, Asoke K Laha, Cadence Design Systems Chelmsford, USA, Lalit M Patnaik, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, U P Phadke, Department of Electronics, New Delhi, A Prabhakar, Indian Telephone Industries, Bangalore, and N Ranganathan, University of South Florida, USA. Dr M A Mottalib, Dept of Computer Science, Dhaka University and S M Aziz, Dept of EEE, BUET, Dhaka presented two papers in the conference. They were the only invitee participants from Bangladesh out of more than 500 participants all over the world. In all 87 papers were presented during the four-day long session. A S M Jabir, Dept of Computer Science also attended the conference as a delegate. Srimat T Chakradhar, C & C Research Labs, NEC-USA, Princeton and P Pal Chaudhuri, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur were the General Co-chairs. The Program Co-chairs were N Ranganathan, University of South Florida, Tampa and A K Majumdar, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. This was the only international conference on integrated circuit design and technology in this part of the world that has a regular schedule. Information processing is fundamental to our existence. Integrated circuits have revolutionized our ability to process large amounts of information quickly and efficiently. In the last ten years, no other industry has come close to experiencing the dramatic technological advancements like the VLSI design. It has increased the step function in design automation, product capabilities and number of transistor count has increased tremendously, bringing in multi-million transistors in a single chip less than 0.5 micron size. Design technology is now at the stage from where it itself cannot accommodate the complexity extremes and time cost constraints facing the industry. This type of conference provides an excellent opportunity for exchange of ideas through technical papers, posters, tutorials, panel discussions and industrial exhibits. Six tutorial sessions were held at VLSI Design '94 conference. This six tutorials was focused on the latest trend the VLSI. These sessions had the topics: Practical Issues on VLSI Test, Multi-chip Modules, Designing with VERILOG HDL, Mixed Signal IC Design, Physical Design of High Performance NLSI Systems, Designing Micro Election IC Systems Using EFPGAS.



"Software Association of Bangladesh" is inaugurated this week. Dr. Md. Abdul Mottalib (CS dept of DU), Dr. Md. Lutfur Rahman (director, BANSDOC), Md. Jahangir Alam (BOU) and Munir-uz-Zaman Chowdhury (director CNS Limited) are seen in the picture.

IBM's PC DOS 6.1: Has MS-DOS Met Its Match?

WELCOME to the DOS battleground, where IBM's PC DOS 6.1 (\$189) is now taking on Microsoft's MS-DOS 6.0. IBM's DOS builds on the code of MS-DOS and generally improves on it, although IBM's DOS has some new utilities that may cause installation problems on some specific systems. The standard DOS commands and programming functions in IBM's version are identical to those in Microsoft's, although IBM optimized its version of the DOS kernel for faster character input/output and batch file processing on 386 and 486 systems. In PC Labs' tests, IBM DOS 6.1 processed batch files just slightly faster than MS-DOS 6.0. The main differences between IBM DOS and MS-DOS are the different utilities and the additional hardware support built into IBM's version. IBM supplies the complete Central Point Backup for DOS and Windows-and uses Central Point's RAM boost for upper-memory optimization. Instead of licensing a third-party antivirus program, IBM included a DOS and Windows program originally written by IBM for its large corporate accounts. The PC DOS program, for systems with a stylus and tablet, lets you use the stylus as a mouse replacement, for writing DOS commands, or for entering data into applications. PCMCIA functions offer DOS and Windows support for fax, modem, memory, and hard

OCR to the WordScan Plus

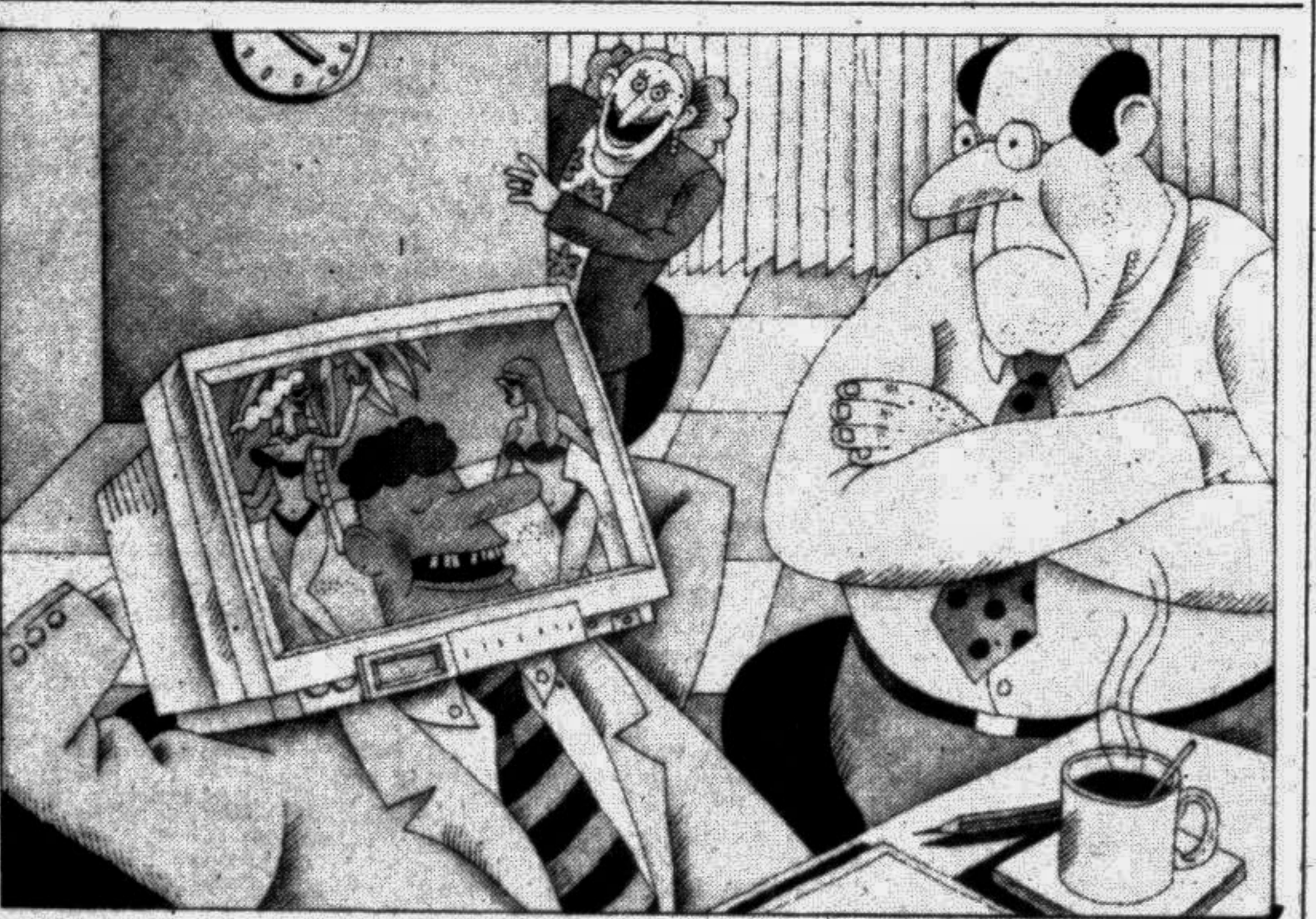
WORDSCAN and WordScan Plus from Calera Recognition Systems are already known as highly accurate optical character recognition (OCR) programs, but with Version 2.0 of both products (WordScan is a scaled-down, personal version of WordScan Plus), Calera provides an even more accurate OCR technology and a host of other high-performance features. Calera's new 32-bit Adaptive Recognition Technology (ART) uses a knowledge base of information describing certain page layouts and characters. ART then applies contextual information during the recognition process to identify characters based on whole words or pages rather than on a character-by-character basis. WordScan and WordScan Plus now support Object Linking and Embedding (OLE) 2.0, and Calera's OCR Aware lets you access WordScan Plus from within a Windows application. WordScan Plus also supports VIM and MAPL, so you can electronically mail text and image files from within WordScan Plus. WordScan and WordScan Plus users can upgrade to Version 2.0 for \$59 and \$99, respectively. Current WordScan users can upgrade to WordScan Plus 2.0 for \$119.

Philips Monitors Have Digital Image Control, Stereo Audio

ITS name isn't normally associated with monitors, but Philips Consumer Electronics Co is making a mark in the field with its new line of Brilliance monitors. The Brilliance 15 is a 15-inch flat-screen multimedia monitor with a built-in stereo amplifier, speakers, headphone jack, and user-adjustable volume control. The Brilliance 17 model has a 0.27-mm dot pitch, supports a refresh rate of 76Hz at 1,280-by-1,024 resolution, and features digital control with 27 display modes. Philips' top-of-the-line 21-inch monitor, the Brilliance 21, has a 0.28-mm dot pitch and also supports a refresh rate of 76 Hz at 1,280-by-1,024 (it also comes in a 20-inch model, which supports a maximum resolution of 1,280-by-1,024 for \$2,499). All three monitors exceed low-emission standards.

Upgrading Problem in PC

OBSCURITY is the greatest fear of computer buyers, and that fear has been focused mainly on the heart of the system: the microprocessor. To alleviate these worries, chip makers such as Intel, Cyrix, and Weitek have devised processor upgrade options to help PC and workstation buyers protect their investments. Intel's well-publicized programme lets users upgrade systems through its OverDrive family of processors. Cyrix's (Richardson, TX) newest family of 486 processors is designed for those who want to upgrade 386DX PCs to 486 performance for only \$299. The company's Cx486DX2 16-/32-, 20-/40-, and 25-/50-MHz clock-doubling processors that upgrade 386DX processors to 486 processors list from \$299 to \$399. Weitek (Sunnyvale, CA) should now be shipping its \$1500 Power uP processor, which the company claims improves performance of SparcStation 2 and IPX workstations by as much as 1.9 times. Are users actually upgrading? Or do processor upgrades amount to a security blanket that's destined to sit in a closet? Chip makers insist the benefits are real and that people are taking advantage of the opportunity to inject an added dose of speed into their computers. Less biased observers say the benefits are more about peace of mind than megahertz. It's more of a marketing ploy than a real need expressed by users. It's become a checklist item now that both buyers and sellers feel they have to satisfy. Fewer than 5 per cent of PC owners have replaced their processor. One reason for the hesitancy is that a majority of users still do not feel comfortable about opening up their PCs to add a circuit board — much less swap processors. Cost is another factor. With the price of Intel 486-based PCs dropping below \$1000, it's sometimes difficult to justify spending \$500 or more on a clock-doubling OverDrive upgrade. New computers are also engineered to work optimally with a faster chip often outperforming similar systems that have been "cobbled together".



What is this? Is it a video conferencing? No, it is an advertisement of a monitor.

— Afsana Seemu

Courtesy: BYTE