Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Monday, February 21, 1994

Ekushey, and Education for All

Along with the rest of the nation, we in The Daily Star, pay our highest respect to the martyrs of the Language Movement, but for whose sacrifice we may not have been speaking in our mother tongue today. And, without our that initial victory over the oppressive state structure of Pakistan we may not have got our second, and far more profound, victory later, in 1971. Hence we pay tribute to these immortal souls not only for igniting the spark that triggered the outpouring of our love for our mother tongue, but also for kindling our patriotic fervour in a manner that sustained us for two more decades and helped us to victory in the War of Liberation.

It is now, for more than four decades, that we are commemorating Ekushey February. The tone or spirit of the commemoration has principally been political and cultural. During the days of Pakistan, the most important task before us was to gain our political and cultural rights, so that we lived as Bengalis, and were able to lead our lives according to our distinctive culture and values. Naturally therefore the main thrust of observance of Ekushey during the fifties and sixties were on political and cultural issues. This was so by necessity of time and sequene of events.

However we would like to argue that a qualitative change had taken place with the birth of independent Bangladesh. While the first two decades of Ekushey observance concentrated on gaining our independence from Pakistani rule, the later decades, especially of the seventies and eighties should have concentrated on nation building. We in The Daily Star feel that the needed amount of emphasis on nation building has not been forthcoming from our observance of Ekushey. Therefore on the occasion of the 42nd observance of this grand and significant day, we would like to suggest that the main message that should emerge from this year's observance should be a message of all round development. We must use the spiritual and emotional strength of the spirit of Ekushey to push forward our development efforts. In this regard the aspect of our development thrust that blends very well with the ethos of Ekushey, is that on Human Resource Development (HRD).

Within the broad area of HRD, the goal of Education for All suits the aim and the spirit of Ekushey. As we have said earlier, and in articles in this page and elsewhere, that our claim for respect for our mother tongue rings hollow with nearly 70 per cent of our people not being able to read or write. It is not only the fact that the vast majority of our people cannot read and write, attendant with it, is the problem of the impact of such a large segment of the population not being able to partake of the creative regeneration of our language and culture. For the safeguarding and development of the language, for which the martyrs of '52 laid down their lives, we need to devote our full energy and strength to the spread of education.

We would like to suggest therefore, that a fresh initiative be taken by the government and the opposition to build a consensus on using the spirit and emotion of Ekushey for a national campaign to eradicate illiteracy and provide primary education to all school going children. There can be no better way of showing respect to the martyrs of our Language Movement, then chalking out such a programme and uniting the nation behind it.

How to Restrain Them

Between 1990 and 1993 five industrialised countries exported 5.4 million tons of toxic waste to 11 Asian nations including Bangladesh and this nation was among the importers of 50,000 tons of lead waste and 100,000 tons of plastic waste that was dumped by those western nations.

Simon Divecha, the Greenpeace activist, while giving the above and other disquieting figures in Manila last week blamed loopholes in the 1989 Basel Convention making such dangerous trade possible. The Convention asked the poor nations to stop importing toxic waste but did not require the rich nations to stop exporting those. This which he dubbed as double standard, made the Basel exercise meaningless.

There can be holes, intended or unwitting, in the pious protestations inked at international forums led by industrialised nations and Divecha is most welcome to call all the bluffs there are in the environmental highminded stuff churned out by those bodies. The western nations have a problem of disposing their toxic waste. No policy is more sacred to them than their needs of finding a ground to dump the toxic bulk. They must be restrained from doing that on top of asking the poor nations to be wary — that is Divecha's point. How to restrain them? By moral pressure, by constant exposure of their untenable conduct and creating world opinion against them? In the absence of any better compulsions, it is understood that these have to be pursued specially with a hope of creating public opinion in the developed nations against such immoral and planetunfriendly acts of the rich ones.

The question that remains after the exposure of the double standard - which is as old as Methuselah — is how to make the poor nations keep the wastes out in a foolproof manner? If these nations fail their people, it doesn't become voices from the same nations to fulminate against the north nations. Coming closer to home, do we not need to compel our national government first to close our gates to toxic wastes before we move the toxic big five to refrain from shipping the dangerous material to Asia?

Although the above is how things should be, there is very much a question of many south nations having at some time or the other governments not strong or responsible enough to protect their nations against these governments' vulnerability to fat cash. And then there is that genuine problem of technologically less developed nations finding it beyond their power to detect the toxic waste used in innocent looking importables like electric transformers — as cited by Philippine environment official Ms Brabante.

While keeping our pressure on our own government in the matter we are one with Divecha for injunctions aimed at restraining the rich nations from exporting toxic material.

Building a Literate Nation

Access to Primary Education

by Mahmood Aminul Islam

The writer, a retired Additional Secretary, was responsible for co-ordinating the policies and programmes of a major primary education project in 1980s while in the Ministry of Education. His views that follow are further to The Daily Star's roundtable on Primary Education published on 12 January.

teacher, usually a woman with 9-10 years of schooling is locally recruited on a monthly salary of Tk 500. She receives an initial training of 10-15 days, and one-day recurrent training with her supervisor every month. The classroom (called school), situated within the safety of the village neighbourhood and easy walking distance of children, runs for two and half hours a day and six days a week without long vacation. The learning takes place in an enjoyable and friendly environment where the teachers pays individual attention to each student and does not burden him/her with home work. The students who are spared from the dread of formal examination are evaluated through weekly and monthly tests. The local community and the parents (either of the parents is obliged to attend a monthly meeting with the teacher) are closely involved in the management of the school and they decide about the school timing. The schools are closely supervised.

THE Daily Star has to be

recently organising a ro-

undtable meeting on universal

primary education (UPE) participated by well known edu-

cationists, development thin-

kers, veteran political leaders,

policy-makers and heads of the

UN donor agencies in Dhaka. It

is perhaps for the first time

that such in-depth discussion

has been held by eminent

personalities to focus on the

problems and prospects of

primary education. A literate

population which can be

achieved only through UPE is

now thought essential for

meaningful development in any

involved for sufficiently long

time in the planning and man-

agement of primary education

in Bangladesh, I propose to

follow up, in this article, the

lead given by the distinguished

participants of the roundtable

primary education has long

remained an unresolved prob-

lem for Bangladesh. Without

going into the (unverifiable) of-

ficial statistics of enrolment

and drop-out, it can be said

that there is still a very large

unmet demand for primary

education in the country

Establishment of 30 non-for-

mal education centres with

900 children in two unions of

Polash thana (Dhaka district)

last August by one of the NGOs

could meet only about 60 per

cent demand of out-of-school

children aged 6-10 years. But

for UPE we have to bring all

primary age group children to

school and retain them till

completion of the 5-year study

The BRAC schools have al-

ready shown the most cost ef-

fective and successful way of

doing this. The BRAC model.

based on the concept of small

community based feeder

schools is a 3-year programme

of non-formal primary educa-

tion for 7-9 years old out-of-

school children. There are 30

children in a class who sit on mats in a classroom (taken on

rental of Tk 200 per month). A

ernment that Nepal's economy

is in the pink of health. Ne-

palis are finding it more dif-

ficult to land a job. The reason:

Indian migrant workers are

with severe unemployment for

several years, are unable to

benefit from the upswing in

their economy. In fact, they

expect the employment situa-

tion in Nepal to become

grimmer for them in the next

few years as migrant labourers

from India, mostly Muslims

fearing Hindu backlash in their

own country following the de-

struction last year of the sixth

century Babri Mosque in

Ayodhya, are pouring into the

Himalayan kingdom which is

The migrants include both

At present, there are no es-

known for religious tolerance.

skilled and semi-skilled work-

ers and are readily employable.

timates on the number of

labourers crossing from either

side of the 1,725-kilometre

open common border between

the two countries. Citizens of

the two countries are free to

cross each other's borders

without any official document.

Landlocked Nepal is often de-

scribed as 'India-locked' be-

cause it is surrounded by

India's poorest and most popu-

lous states of Uttar Pradesh.

Bihar and Bengal.

Nepalis, who had to put up

filling the vacancies.

Despite claims of the gov-

IGRANT workers seem

to be a problem not just

Creating universal access to

As somebody who has been

country.

meeting.

warmly congratulated for

All these arrangements have resulted in regular pupil attendance with almost no dropout. On completion of the 3year studies, children generally get enrolled in grades III/IV of local primary schools where they, reportedly, do well. These schools imparting non-formal education are in fact functioning as feeder schools to primary education. Mr Abed who is the progenitor of BRAC schools thinks that almost 100 per cent children in a village can be enrolled, and 98 per cent of them retained till they complete 2/3 years of education.

Following the BRAC example, 200 satellite schools, imparting education to children at the competency level of grades I an II, have been opened in community provided structures and with the financial and administrative support of the government. These schools are run by locally resident SSC passed (10 years of schooling) female teachers on a monthly pay of Tk 500. The satellite schools have proved to be successful in terms of enrolment, regular pupil attendance and community involvement. But it seems.

satellite schools are evolving in a slightly different way which' may dampen the community support for education and lower their efficiency as teach-

ing institution. For example, the government is now trying to construct a 2-roomed school building on land being donated by the community to house satellite schools. We would need several thousands of the time and resource constraints? Moreover, what is wrong in renting premises for

satellite schools as BRAC is do-

The satellite school building, in a way, would be a replica of the existing primary schools which would give rise to vested interests. Already there are reports that satellite school teachers want government servant status. It is also reported that the class size is being increased from 30 to 50 due to local pressure. If done, this will destroy the charm and efficiency of satellite schools. These tendencies have to be resisted lif we want to stick to BRAC model), and instead, arrangements for close supervision of satellite

IV and V in the afternoon shift.

confusion, the satellite schools idea can be adopted as a twotier system of primary education as shown below. The first tier will be a 2-year programme of instruction as is being presently done by satellite schools. They can be renamed as feeder schools. The primary schools will only admit students in grades III, IV and V. and arrange for their teaching in one or two shifts. A surge in enrolment in the upper classes is soon expected with the introduction of compulsory primary education (CPE). Moreover, classroom accommodation would become unmanageable with the (expected) opening of hundreds of feeder schools. The proposed system would also reduce the demand, in the immediate

> With the rise in enrolment in primary schools there will be corresponding additional demand for admission in secondary schools. Since there are not enough high schools to accommodate them, we have to think of upgrading selected primary schools into junior high schools (VI, VII and VIII). Education up to grade VIII is considered necessary to acquire basic level education. And this cannot be denied to anybody desirous to study beyond primary level.

context, for construction of

new primary schools and

appointment of new teachers

for these schools.

schools by appointing a com-

plement of supervisors outside

the supervisory structure of

primary schools have to be

areas where satellite schools

have been established, chil-

dren find it difficult to enrol

themselves in Class III after

finishing grades I and II. This

will happen as long as the ex-

isting primary schools con-

tinue teaching children in

grades I and II in the morning

shift, and those in grades III,

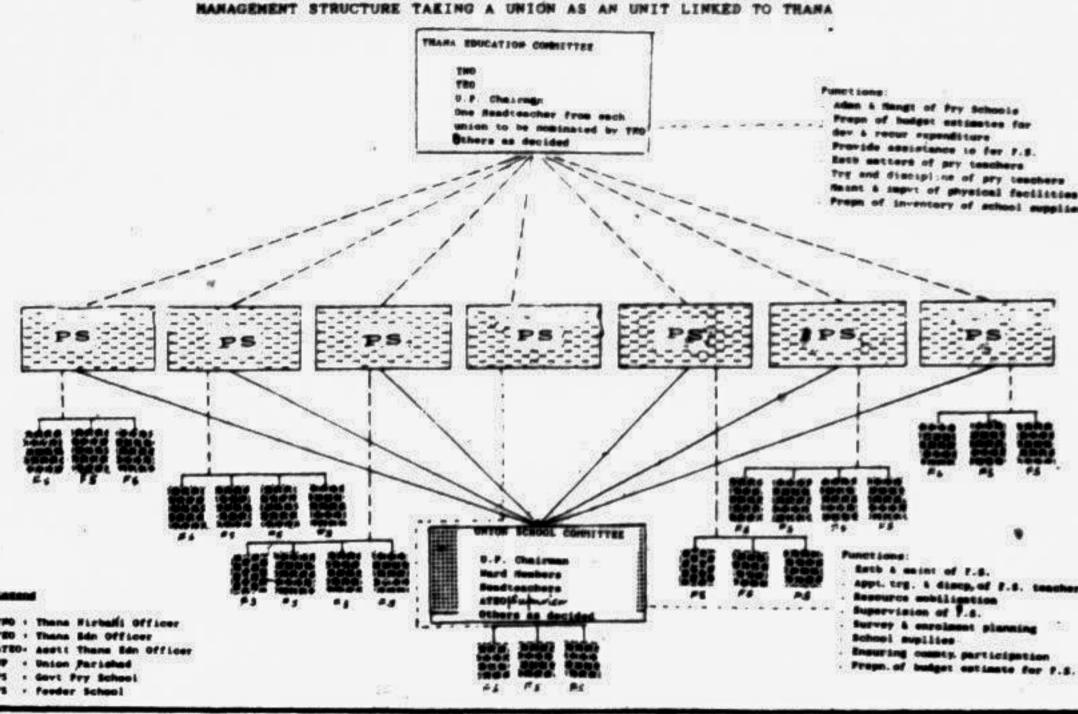
In order to avoid the above

There are reports that in

(First part ends here. Second part will follow.)

these schools to ensure universal access to education by children. Is it possible to construct so many schools given

DIAGRAM SHOWING PROPOSED TWO-TIER PRIMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM AND



Nepal's Labour Force Becomes 'Indianised' Jan Sharma writes from Kathmandu

The flood of migrant workers from India occurred after the restoration of the multiparty parliamentary democracy in Nepal. Coincidentally, the economic, political and trade systems of the kingdom also seemed to undergo Indianisation

A contributing factor to the influx of migrant workers is the enactment by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's government of the 1992 Labour Act which allowed Indian citizens to hold permanent semi-government and industrial jobs.

While the Indians are moving to the kingdom. Nepalis who can afford and are faced wit bleak prospects at home, are going to Malaysia, Japan. Singapore, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and other countries in search of jobs. A few get lucky while many are victimised by fake agents. They travel on fake visas and rely on false promises. Even foreign nationals are involved in the labour

export racket. Nepal recently rescued 23 Nepalis languishing in Malaysian jails and another 195 Nepalis at the Immigration Detention Depot. Government officials said many Nepalis are in Korean prisons while some Nepali girls have been forced into prostitution. Similar cases have been reported in many

is surrounded by its neighbour's poorest and most populous states other countries. Hari Prasad Panday, a mem-Hong Kong who would be afber of parliament for the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), the country's largest opposition

The Himalayan kingdom is 'India-locked' because it

group, said of the situation, Thousand of people are facing unemployment at home while about five million Nepalis are forced to live a humiliating life outside the country. Nepal's labour force grows by 200,000 every year making the unemployment problem

more serious, says an independent study commissioned by the Federation of Nepal Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI).

· Also joining the job market are Nepalis returning after serving on the Indian and British Gurkha armies. There are about 150,000 Nepalis serving in the Indian army while those serving in the British army number 8,500. With the British government deciding, as part of its austerity measure, to cut down drastically the number of Nepali Gurkhas, many will be going home and looking for employ-

As for Gurkhas serving in fected after the colony reverts to China in 1997, Britain has assured Kathmandu that they would be provided with employment opportunities either in Britain or elsewhere. There are 6,600 Gurkhas in Hong Kong. After 1997, 2,500 of the Nepalis would continue to serve in Britain while the rest are likely to join jobseekers back home.

The FNCCI survey showed that the total unemployment figure for last year was 650,000.

A major user of Nepali labour is the flourishing carper and ready-made garment industry in the capital city and other towns. It attracts jobseekers from rural areas. The more educated Nepalis prefer jobs in the modern, organised sectors but new job opportunities have fallen short of the real demand.

Public and private investment in various sectors is expected to create an additional 1.5 million jobs between 1992-96 which will help alleviate the unemployment problem,

says Dr Ram Saran Mahat, vice chairman of the powerful National Planning Commission.

Hari Shankar Tripathi, governor of the Nepal Rashtra Bank, the country's central banking authority, says that recent free market reforms and privatisation policies have made the economy more dynamic and competitive. This is also expected to create new

The government has laid down a strong groundwork to reach the goal of sustainable economic development, Mr Tripathi said. The gross domestic product (GDP), which increased by three per cent in 1993, is expected to grow by six per cent in 1995 while the rate of inflation fell down from 21.8 per cent last year to 7.5 per cent this year.

Foreign trade increased by 33 per cent to 11.2 billion rupees (about US\$24 million) while imports increased by only 9.2 per cent to 22.76 billion rupees (US\$49 million). The balance of payments has been satisfactory. The total foreign exchange reserves stood at 31.01 billion rupees (US\$66.86 million) up from 22.36 billion rupees (US\$48.21 million last year.

But despite these impressive figures, the government is still being blamed for not doing enough to create job opportunities.

The education policy is being criticised for not doing a good work of preparing Nepalis for the job market. The primary and secondary school systems remain weak in vocational and skills training relevant to Nepal's actual situation. Higher education remains highly subsidised and is far cheaper than primary educa-

The lack of a human development policy has resulted in a paradox; high unemployment rates in spite of many unfilled vacancies.

A government task force in 1983 recommended the regulation of the border in three stages: registration of people crossing the border in either direction to be enforced immediately, a system of entry permits to be introduced a year later, and a regular passport system 'at an appropriate

Fear of retaliation from India has prevented the government from implementing the recommendations. Many still remember that requirement of work permits for non-Nepali workers in the three districts of Kathmandu Valley in 1987 was one of several reasons behind India's economic blockade against Nepal in

But many believe that unless the entry of foreign workers is regulated, other measures to ease unemployment would

have little effect.

— Depthnews Asia

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Capital gain through share appreciation

Sir, With the vitalization of the Stock Exchange activities through foreign investors' participation and with the establishment of Securities and Exchange Commission, more people are getting interested to invest in the stock market.

At the same time small investors find it an easy way to achieve a good capital gain by investing in strong shares. To show this capital gain in the annual tax assessment one has to have proper documents from the stock exchange.

But at present probably no such instruments are available at the Stock Exchange. From the discussion with the members of the Stock Exchange it is gathered that the receipts those are given by the stock exchange brokers during purchase/sale requests are just papers between the brokers and their clients; these cannot be documents for the tax purpose. So what are the related papers and who will issue these to the seller of a share?

May I request the authorities of the Stock Exchange, Securities and Exchange Commission, NBR and other financial institutions to please

show us the procedures for obtaining the related papers on capital gain from the sale of appreciated shares (May I also humbly request honourable professor Mr Abu Ahmed who wrote many articles on share market and related topics in The Daily Star as a guest columnist to throw some light on the subject, please). This will certainly encourage honest and genuine investors to boost the present capital market.

A H M Zahirul Haque Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Translation of university books

Sir, In recent years, English knowledge of the students in general has declined like anything. But most of the university level text and reference books are in English. They are vet to be translated into Bengali. Even otherwise bright students cannot decipher the meaning of many a content of English text and reference books. Even after securing star marks in HSC most of the students find it hard to understand the English reference books.

Students alone are not to be blamed for this sad state of af-

fairs. There is also a serious dearth of quality English teachers at all levels — school, college as well as university. And things are not improving. It is rather going from bad to

However, this calls for an urgent need to translate English text and reference books in Bengali. Time is fast approaching when it will be difficult to find suitable teachers to translate English reference books into Bengali. Hence it is high time our universities should take initiative for translating all important text and reference books into Bengali. Board of teachers should be set up for this purpose with provision of appropriate remuneration. Government should patronise the universities with adequate fund and logistic support.

Otherwise, we shall be limiting the horizon of knowledge of our future generations very seriously. And they will not forgive us for landing them in such a situation. There is no harm in having higher education in one's own language as is done in many European countries, China, Japan etc. Will the Ministry of Education look into

Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

Money snatchers

Sir. Like the alarming rate of increase of traffic accidents leading to tragic deaths, gruesome injuries and permanent disability of persons involved. bus dacoity and robbery has

become the order of the day, in which we take a casual interest when we come across such news in newspapers and journals. On the contrary, we often are surprised when news of such mishaps do not appear in newspapers or when we do not hear of such incidents from some one.

Recently a businessman was robbed of a huge amount (Taka 9.5 lakh) by a group of miscreants in Narayangani, according to a daily. Eye witnesses told that four youths riding a car followed the cement trader from Pagla and snatched his brief case containing the above amount. These mastans fled away blasting a bomb. This is not the first case of this nature, but number of incidents like this have taken place, on a regular basis, earlier.

This is a cause of deep concern for all law abiding peaceloving citizens. The law and order situation has extremely deteriorated and the law enforcing agencies have miserably failed in discharging their duties. We are living in a state of panic and blue funk.

The question now arises whether we are living under the rule of dreaded ruffians and mastans or our elected representatives in the Jatiya Sangsad. Are they more involved in their own welfare than that of the people who elected them? Will the Home Minister and Road Transport authority take stringent measures to eliminate such mas-

N H Suft Tajmahal Road, Mohammad pur, Dhaka

tani and accidents?

OPINION

Campus Violence — Consensus of Silence!

It is high time for the Government or the State (apart from BNP, the ruling party) to publicly announce, in clear terms, and categorically, the official policy on combating the unabated campus violence, which has become a national problem for the last three years, and is agitating the minds of the guardians in regard to the future of higher

education in the country. Many pious statements have been issued by the ministers, politicians, academics, students, and govt spokesman on the issue, but to no effect. To bring the issue into the spotlight once again, here are some pointers:

Whether the student fronts of the political parties would be allowed, that is, continue to operate inside the campus This sensitive and explosive is sue should be reviewed on allparty basis through open debate in the JS (this sensible action is long overdue).

Why the JS is postponing continuously the debate on this malaise? No party is saying anything clearly. Why? Who should set the ball rolling, and take the initiative? Obviously not the Opposition.

Without a clear and firm policy there is no point in 'urging" the educational sector, teachers and students to continue the studies "peacefully", and "resist" the evil forces, and bring about a "peaceful atmosphere"! On the basis of what policy? what is

this policy? Where is the policy? What the policy says? Who can answer this simple, direct question?

It is a political issue, and the politicians have to come to a consensus. What efforts have been made towards achieving a consensus? Why the process is taking so long (as in Bosnia!)?

The pros and cons of direct involvement of political fronts in the academic field involving the registered students actively pursuing courses of studies should be openly debated at national level, so that decisions taken later could be implemented without opposition and a spate of hartals. Why this course of action is not being initiated? Why there is complete silence on campus violenge? Such silence does not entitle the government to the benefit of the doubt, and saps

public confidence. Campus violence is a side issue of a very basic or core issue: the direct involvement of students in politics. Why we do not see campus violence in other countries of the same intensity and duration as we see here? Why the politicians do not explain to the public the solutions inside or outside

the parliament? There appears to be a consensus on silence! It is earnestly hoped that this statement would be contra-

dicted

A Zabr Dhaka.