

Feature

Education and Commitment

by Abul Ashraf Noor

As an old teacher I am much concerned with morality in academic industry of the 20th-Century-World. I strongly feel that our educational spectrum would try to do everything possible to achieve intellectual guarantee of human salvation for the advancement of modern concept of true education in a developing country like ours.

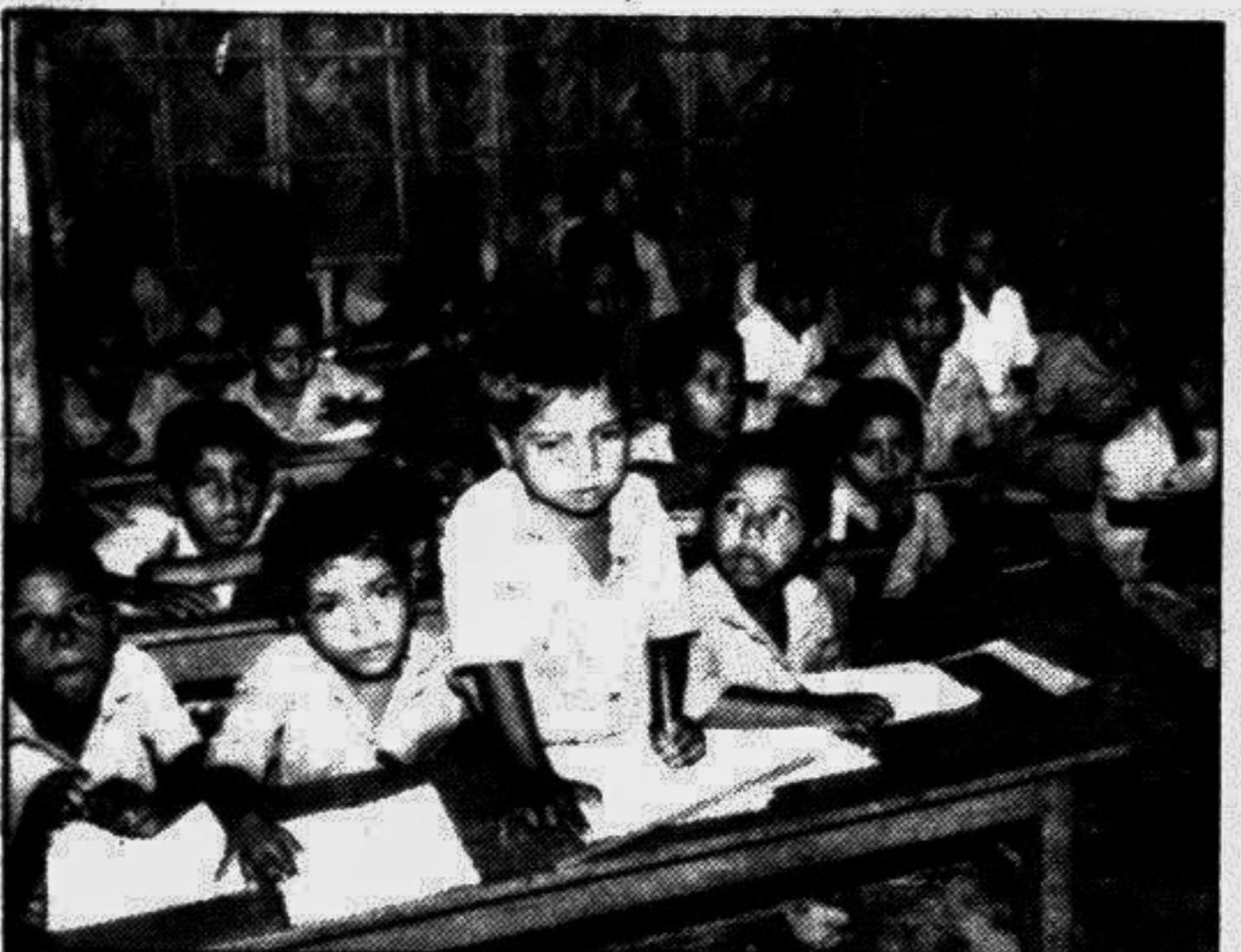
With my limited research findings I sincerely believe that the correct approach to the good life in the fast changing human societies seems to be the inter-relationships with one another in the vast chain of dialectic educational endeavours to reach the common goals set before us all today — nationally and internationally.

If we preach the totality of the interests of education in all dimensions, we must practise it in actual life. The question — "How to achieve the educational salvation within a generation to make a perfect community of human beings" — is constantly on our lips, but we shy away from the more basic and vital question of the times. We as teachers must be as concerned to promote co-operation between teachers of differing backgrounds as we are to bring together teachers with the common interests.

With this in mind, the following conditions may be of great value in recasting the green minds of the learners and consequently the existing pattern of education at all levels for the nation's future.

United teaching profession, economic security for all teachers, adequate financing for public education, fundamental human rights for all teachers and pupils, leadership in solving social problems.

The important thing is that the above conditions are the bases for action and not the excuses for inaction. One should endorse the view that



Some World Vision assisted children of Maniknagar.

— Photo: Ajit Baroi

the teacher must be a "moral crusade" in the educational miseries that deter the global development processes in true education for the developing countries of the world.

Through my academic investigations both at home and abroad, that relates to the overall development of the untapped human and natural resources for the attainment of good life in our resurgent

tus for teachers and academic sun for students, nationally and internationally.

If this is a fundamental truth in education, conditions of work including salary, social status and the availability of resources should be so improved as to attract and retain the highest quality of individuals as teachers in this profession.

The writer is the Principal of Pabna Cadet College.

FEBRUARY is the month in which the people of this country takes renewed pledge to follow the ideals of the martyrs of the historic language movement. In this month, we talk about our dreams, our promise to the development of our language and we talk about education.

Bangladesh is the country majority of which can neither read or write. Eight million out of 11 million population of the country is illiterate. With such bulk of mass remaining uneducated, the country's trek to desired prosperity is near to impossible.

Literacy is yet another topic which has received minimum attention from the policy planners. Even much of the discussion in the month of February revolves round language and literature, and not literacy. This was viewed at a lively discussion on literacy situation of the country at "Avimat" magazine programme of the Bangladesh Television on February 12. The programme was conducted by eminent journalist Muhammad Jahangir, Secretary of Primary and Mass Education Ministry Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed, BRAC Executive Director Fazle Hasan Abed and editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam took part in the discussion.

Explaining the government's initiatives, Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed said the term "education for all" apply for both mass literacy and compulsory primary education. The objective of the

compulsory primary education is to bring the children from six to 10 years of age to the schools. Such measure would raise the country's overall literacy situation as well as control illiteracy among the adults. The Compulsory Primary Education Programme, through media campaign using radio, TV and cinema, aims at encouraging the parents to enroll their children in the schools.

The Secretary informed that this had improved the rate of enrolment at the schools in the rural areas of the country over the years. He said that the government was planning a survey to assess the rate. The programme was initiated in 1982 at 68 thanas on an experimental basis. Besides, school brigades, meetings, round-tables, mothers' rally were also being planned in the rural areas.

The government was also planning to assist the satellite schools run by community and madrasahs.

Appointment of teachers to fill up the vacant posts and infrastructure development were also under consideration.

The government's programme was "flexible" and it could be amended or updated in future, he said.

Fazle Hasan Abed said that for a basic education for the country, the government should go ahead with its compulsory primary education programme.

Compulsory Primary Education was also required for increasing the overall literacy rate of the country.

The NGOs can only com-

Education

The Role of Education in Sustaining and Developing Culture

group-identity or from both.

As TS Eliot proclaimed, a multiple culture is higher than a mono-culture. Whereas earlier styles of education were all-embracing, there is a tendency in modern education to specialise and so deprive students of breadth of vision.

There is nowadays strong pressure to succeed, to gain means of subsistence and saleable skills by selecting narrow disciplines at an early age, instead of aiming to become better cultured people.

Ideally, education should

stead of liberative, and some have realised they can only find God outside the religious structures. As one said, "Let me kill my God and I shall find my religion!" True religion, some would say, is to perform one's earthly duties.

Vivekananda said that it is to worship humanity. There is a need for education to be freed from the shrinking effects of formal religion. ("Buddhi mukti" — Viv.)

So redefinition of education is necessary. The posture needs to be adjusted: educa-

groups >> individuals). Affluence brings self-sufficiency and no further need of others. Thus Gandhi after Independence is not now jobless; he takes up the fight against the insularity brought about by sufficiency.

Mujibul Huq welcomed the call for deindigenisation of education and the need for broader culture, where the "extended person" is the goal of our living. A self-centred person or insular group is ipso facto uncultured.

Kazi Fazlur Rahman spoke of the judgement of the villagers on those who received education in the towns — "clever but not educated." In the West a person may simply pick a job like plumbing because it is well-paid — without considering the job-satisfaction or higher value of an occupation for which he is trained and capable. Education can work against education. Economists cannot function properly unless broadly educated. Living skills are too often neglected within a rate-

race education system.

Mabud Fatema Kabir said that culture should not be something we think we can create artificially; it grows automatically. We fail to develop properly because we impose our own interpretations and twist the cultural components we are given. People choose selectively what they want out of religious statements. Thus we get distortions which are not real religion.

Sanjib Chowdhury drew attention to the sad effect of the pressures of a growing mono-culture in Bangladesh which had the effect of forcing Hindus out one by one. This is something relatively new. In earlier years it was accepted that there was room for all, but in many parts of Bangladesh now this no longer holds. This is a sad thing for all, not just for the minority communities.

He further expressed the hope that universal education would produce more honest religious leaders, and accommodation for all which was a tenet of all faiths.

Chitta Francis Reberrio spoke of the attempts of Shikha Anirban Foundation over the past 12 years and Bangladesh Inter-religious Council for Peace and Justice (BICPAJ) to provide fora for all faiths and religions to come to a deeper and more creative cross-cultural understanding.

Hossainur Rahman emphasised the need for meeting.

There were many transactions between human beings besides academic ones. Deindigenisation of education is the only way forward.

The scientific temper which Jawaharlal Nehru extolled is still along way from realisation in West Bengal, let alone East Bengal.

Research into the development of Islam in the steps of Maulana Kamal Azad was one of the major needs of the world's cultural development.

Courtesy — Nijera Shikhi

Where shall I get books, copies and pencils?

by Onok Ali Hossain Shahida

REBECCA and Rahela are two sisters born in close succession. Rebecca is aged five, Rahela four. Even at that age they have to work for a living. Walking through the streets of Faridpur every day they pick up the shed bokul flowers and string them together into garlands for sale. Each sells for a taka.

They live in a slum near Faridpur railway station. Their father Hiro Mia is a rickshaw driver with very meagre earnings. The two sisters therefore have to supplement the family earning by selling garlands. Both are keen to go to school but do not have the means.

"If I am given books, copies and pencils, I can go to school," says Rebecca.

There are countless children like Rebecca and Rahela in the slums of this country who lack the opportunity for education. Fortunately for them, Bangladesh Shishu Academy has taken project from the year 1993 to create educational opportunity for underprivileged children. Under the project the Academy plans to implement 13 developmental programmes, one of which is compulsory primary education.

The programme purports to bring the underprivileged children of the country under the coverage of education and to guarantee their basic rights. One of these 13 programmes is BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) School Education. Under this programme, children are trained so that they are eligible for admission into class one. Besides acquainting them with the alphabet, the right kind of aptitude for going to school is also being developed.

The effort of the Shishu Academy that aims at implementing compulsory primary education in the country, will create an educational opportunity for the underprivileged children aged four to six years in 44 districts. Besides creating interest among these un-

derprivileged children about going to school, instruction is imparted in signing and dancing, drawing and cleanliness of environment.

These schools have started functioning from January 1993. Shishu Academy has achieved substantial success in this one-year instruction. Golam Kibria, director of Shishu Academy, says that children are being brought to school from different slum areas and books, copies and pencils are being supplied free of cost.

These children are taught three to four days a week. The students of Dhaka University and workers of different NGOs have come forward to offer their services as instructors. Some of them receive a small honorarium but many work without honorarium and out of pure altruistic motives.

The objective of Shishu Academy besides giving the children education, is to make them aware of their rights and to give expression to their unfulfilled desires.

About compulsory primary education Gias Kamal Chowdhury, Bangladesh correspondent for the Voice of America and special correspondent of BSS says: "For bringing every child under compulsory primary education we shall have to give a thought to the circumstances that prevent parents from sending their children to school. We must make the parents interested. The press, radio, TV and the NGOs can play a positive role in this."

Now the number of people in the age bracket 1 to 18 is about 50 million. The under 5 children number 18 million. Eighty-four percent of them live below the poverty line and are deprived of their rights from birth. They keep floundering in the quagmire of poverty. The endeavours of Shishu Academy are aimed to save the children from this quagmire. If they succeed, the Rebeccas and Rahelas, can go to school and dream of a beautiful future.



Issue: Primary Education: Maltibari Dighar Government Primary School in Kurigram is an unconventional educational institute. It has been recognised as the best school for having a unique feature.

Apart from the teachers, the local educated youths work as volunteers to teach the students in two shifts of a day, i.e. morning and evening.

It is compulsory for students of class five to attend coaching classes in the evening. Some students from other schools in the nearby villages also attend the special classes.

Therefore the students do not need to hire teachers or do homework at home. Thus, the students are securing excellent results. The involvement of youths as volunteers has made positive impact on society.

— Photo: Rafiqur Rahman/Development Features

Avimat:

Everyone has to be Literate, But How?

BRAC schools is also important since classes may take place anytime of the day convenient to both the students and the teachers. Mahfuz Anam said the government should give due attention to the education sector. New statistics have been spewing out, but in effect no actual development has

taken place. Bureaucracy-led education drive across the nation would not gain its momentum unless it was supported by the NGOs. All dramatic results on the education sector have come from the NGOs. Quoting a UNICEF report, Anam said there are one crore and seven lakh students be-

tween six to 10 years of age. Out of the total 69 are never enrolled in the schools. Another 59 lakh students drop out. Literally 49 lakh students complete their five-year study. The drop out rate is 70 to 80 per cent.

Much of the government allocation for education sector went for salary of the teacher, he said. For every 100 taka earmarked, taka 67 was spent as salary, taka 7.50 for furniture, taka 3.00 for books and other educational inputs, 0.50 paisa for teachers' training, 0.50 paisa for management supervision and taka 2.00 for infrastructure maintenance of the schools. In contrast, the BRAC model shows that the emphasis is more on educational inputs.

Quoting another study, he said out of the 365 days, only 440 hours were devoted for classes in Bangladesh while the figure was 750 hours in Sri Lanka, 750 hours in the Philippines, 1100 hours in Indonesia and 1200 hours in China. Mahfuz Anam also called for de-politicising the education sector for speeding up its pace. He suggested that the MPAs can arrange literacy competition among the Jatiya Sangsad constituencies.

A total of 118 letters containing various suggestions from the audience were received. The categorised suggestions are as follows:

1. Education Extension Month programme can be arranged to launch a social movement. All educational institutions and the NGOs

should plan mass literacy programmes.

2. Open mass literacy schools at all villages. Teachers involved in mass literacy should be rewarded.

3. Arrangement can be made to educate the maktabs-going students.

4. Every family should be identified as an institution for literacy and responsibilities can be given to educate at least five families in the neighbourhood.

5. The government can reward the representative of a locality with high literacy rate. Special allocation can be given for development of the area.

6. SSC and HSC students can each educate one illiterate person. It will educate seven to eight lakh people every year.

7. A ward-level literacy committee can be formed.

8. Increased coordination is required to spread the general education projects, non-formal education and the mosque-based education.

9. The number of night schools in the country be increased where people can be educated free of cost.

10. Bangla alphabets can be used as election symbol in many polls that take place in the country every year. The candidates can arrange literacy programme to secure their vote.

11. The schools run by the NGOs should be kept secular.

12. Voluntary organisations can launch literacy programme, forgetting bickering.

13. More schools be set up in the unions to give adult education. Women should be appointed as teachers.

14. TV and radio should broadcast a list stating why people need education besides requirement to his job.

15. The student fronts of the political parties can be used against illiteracy.

16. Committees can be formed at thana level with scouts as members. University and college students can take part in literacy programme during their vacations.

17. MPs should be permanent residents of their constituencies so that they can take part in literacy programme with them.

18. The government can organise the educated youths and launch literacy programme with them.

19. Villages having highest literacy rate should be rewarded. District Education Officer (mass education) can be employed to look after the matter.

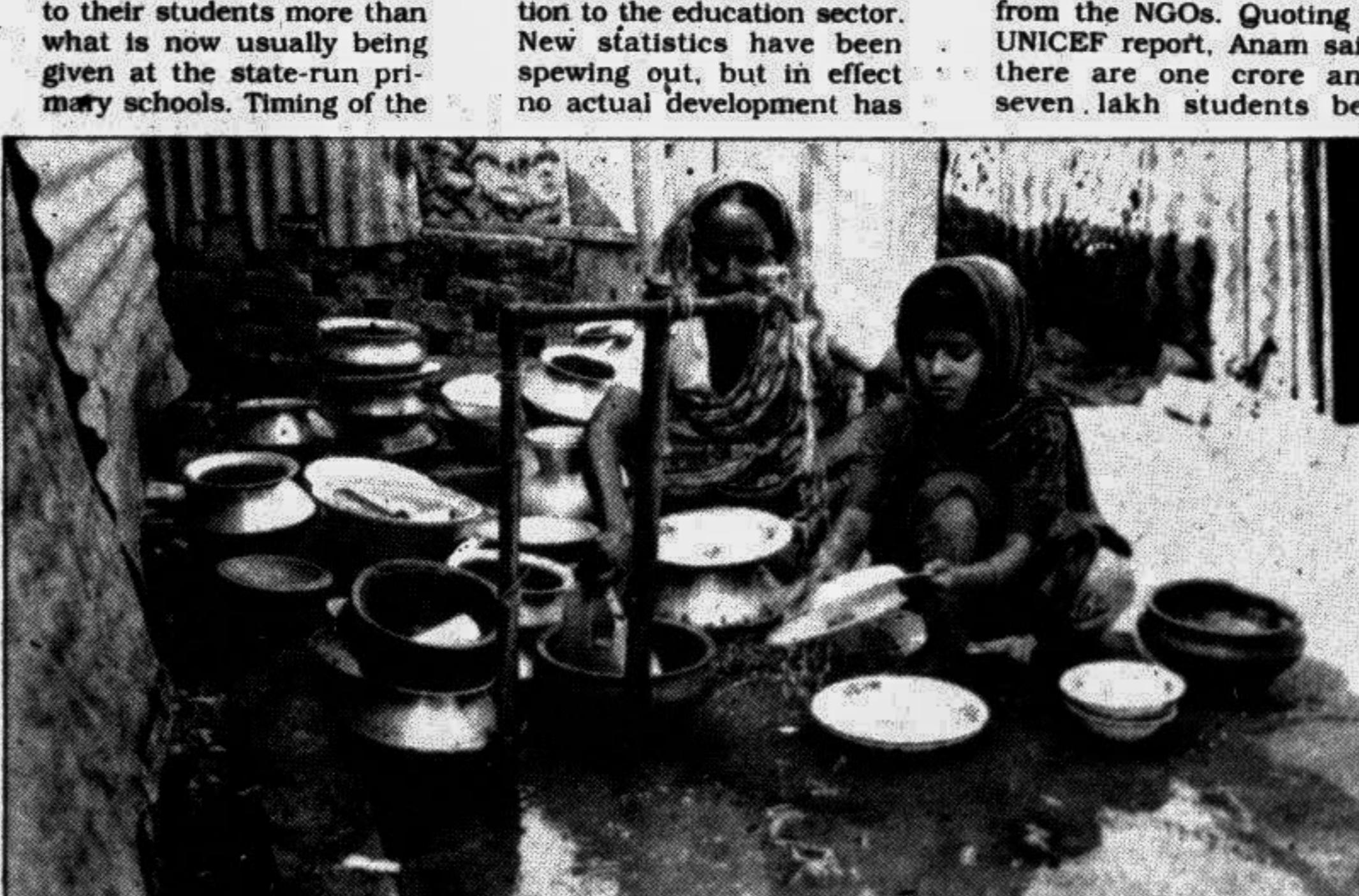
20. The boys and girls employed in the households can be educated for 20 to 25 minutes in their work-sites.

21. Garment factory workers can be educated for 20 to 25 minutes in their work-sites.

22. Prices of educational materials should be brought down.

23. Political organisations can launch literacy programme, forgetting bickering.

Prepared by
Masud Hasan Khan



Poverty often pulls children out of school. Failure of the school system to serve families' needs recognising this issue is one cause. This ranges from improper school timing to a school system unable to convince parents of its usefulness. Schools must become capable of meeting various challenges of life including poverty to be successful.

— Courtesy Unicef