

## The Handicapped: Prisoners of Society

by Anjir Liton

Fariduddin never thought that he would one day spend ten thousand Taka just to get married. With both his legs crippled from polio, two sisters and another handicapped brother to support and not a single patch of land to his name, the thought was like a dream even in 1991. But exactly that is what he did in 1992. Not only that, he is now the owner of a big shop.

When Fariduddin was in the deepest of his despair with no ends in view, Social Assistance and Rehabilitation for the Physically Vulnerable (SARPV) lent him one hundred Taka to start selling bananas. Within a week, Farid repaid the money keeping a fair profit margin out of his business. This time he took Taka 4,000 from SARPV and started his shop. Before the turn of the year, he became self-supporting.

Farid's success prompted many other handicapped in his

practices, both economic and cultural. He views that because of the society's outlook, the handicapped do not get the right environment for a normal life.

To detect the extent of the problem SARPV had recently conducted a survey in the Mohammadpur area of the Dhaka city. Among the 30,373 families surveyed, 1,709 detected, had at least one of the family members handicapped. This means 1.04 per cent of the population in the area are handicapped. This includes the blinds, mentally retarded, deaf and dumb. Those who stutter or have epileptic feets were excluded from this survey.

The survey also shows that 26.41 per cent people are handicapped by birth. While diseases cause 47.32 per cent of the handicaps, accidents account for 17.16 per cent and wrong treatment causes 2.75 per cent of all handicaps.



Every disabled child has the right to have a better chance for personal development through special assistance, health care and education.

— Courtesy Grassroots ADAB quarterly

village to start a new life. Shahidul Huq, director of SARPV says, "The handicapped are not the do-hoppers. With little support, they can work miracles like Farid and others."

"Handicapped are human beings too," Huq goes on to say. "They also have the right to live, work, play or get educated."

Huq feels that charities will not help the disabled. They need specific action programme under the government's regular development activities.

Shahidul Huq is presently working towards the rehabilitation of the handicapped. For his efforts, he was awarded an Ashoka Fellow. Huq is now busy pursuing the government in formulating specific policies for the handicapped. He demands equal status for them.

Huq says the problems of the handicapped have originated from the social practices both economic form the social

## Clinton Signs Comprehensive Education Reform Legislation

by Alexander M Sullivan

President Clinton signed into law March 31 a comprehensive reform act that he said will establish "education standards for what every child in every American school should know... world-class standards," reports USIS.

"This is a new and different approach for the national government," the president said, "a remarkable departure" for a nation which has previously rested the vast bulk of responsibility for public education with thousands of local school districts.

"Today we can say America is serious about education," Clinton declared. "America cares about the future of every child in America who leads the world in the 21st Century because we're going to make sure (students are) living up to the fullest of their God-given capacity."

The president termed the new law a "foundation" for education in the America of tomorrow, when "we provide an opportunity for every child who doesn't go to college to get the kind of skills training they need; when every child who wants to go to college will never have to worry about how to pay for it, and every adult will have the opportunity to get lifetime training. This is the beginning."

Noting that the average American will change jobs as many as 10 times in a lifetime, the president declared the "Goals 2000: Educate America" act will help prepare Americans "to learn for a lifetime.... We have never done it before; we are going to do it now because of this bill." The president's remarks during the signing ceremony in California were monitored at

the White House.

"We believe," Clinton said, "every child can and must learn" at levels competitive with children of other cultures and other countries. He added that adults "have a practical and a moral obligation" to children "to see that (students) have the chance to do so."

Clinton, who is vacationing in San Diego, California, traveled to the nearby Zamorano Fine Arts Academy, a public elementary school, to sign the measure; a small group of students was invited to sign a copy of the bill which will remain on display at the school. The president promised to have a more formal ceremony for the legislation when he returns to Washington next week.

Clinton said he chose to sign the act at Zamorano because it has achieved excellence with a 900-member student body "that is very diverse, ethnically, racially and economically. You look like America will look in the 21st Century, and we have to win with you," Zamorano is a "magnet school," meaning it draws students from the entire school district because of its academic record.

Before signing the bill, Clinton, his wife Hillary, and Education Secretary Richard Riley shared a conference telephone call with prominent congressional supporters of the bill, including Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell; Senator Edward Kennedy, chairman of the Senate Education Committee; a key Republican supporter, Senator James Jeffords; and House Speaker Tom Foley.

The new law is a culmination of a national grass-roots

effort launched after a presidential commission reported on the deficiencies of public education in a report titled "A Nation At Risk." President Bush convened a summit meeting of the nation's governors at the University of Virginia in 1989 and Clinton, then the governor of the state of Arkansas, played a key role in the National Governors' Conference in drawing up proposals now included in the legislation.

The law provides that "every student should enter school ready and able to learn" through pre-school programmes such as Head Start and that "90 per cent of our young people should graduate from high school on time, just as" students do in other nations.

The legislation, while establishing education standards in basic areas, will leave it to local school districts, which bear the major responsibility for public education, to determine how to reach or exceed the standards. The law will establish tests to measure school performance.

Clinton noted there is already a ferment of change in education, with "people... trying things that work, that are different, that have never been tried before." Including new ways of organizing schools and new classes of teachers. "We know in the end the children have to learn," he said. "So we want world-class standards, we want a way of measuring whether the children learn or not, and then we want a way to say to people here are the standards, here is how to know whether you're making it or not, now you figure out how to do it. Use your mind, use

your energy and we will support you. We'll try to encourage all your best ideas, all your energy."

The new law will establish uniform national education goals, promote flexibility at the local level to achieve those goals, and provide vocational training for students who do not enter college. Labor Secretary Robert Reich, on congressional passage of the measure last week, asserted it "will enable businesses to join hands with educators, labor and community leaders" to establish skill standards. "For the first time," he added, "employers, workers and educators will be able to speak a common language about the skills needed in the workplace."

As Riley pointed out, the law includes provision for a federal role in making schools safer for children, while encouraging higher academic standards and better teachers. It will foster use of new technology to improve learning.

Americans, Riley said, "want their children to be part of the new emerging high-tech, high-knowledge economy of the 21st Century. These voluntary national standards in the core academic subjects of English, civics, geography, history, math, science, foreign languages and the arts will give parents, educators and business a clear indication of what constitutes a world-class education."

Actress Jane Alexander, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, hailed the measure, asserting its focus on the arts "will cultivate creative thinkers and artistically literate children... offering skills which enhance all learning throughout life."

## Grants to Help Non-Profit Groups

US officials have announced the availability of grant funds needed by non-profit groups such as schools, hospitals and libraries to access advanced telecommunications networks.

Secretary of Commerce Ronald Brown told reporters March 7 that the "far-reaching new programme" will provide \$26 million in matching grants for projects proposed by any non-profit entity, ranging from state and local governments to health care providers, school districts, museums and police departments.

"The grant programme will be highly competitive and will promote innovative uses of advanced telecommunications in these critical areas," Brown said.

Larry Irving, chief of the department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), which will administer the programme, said the



Every child has the right to have free primary education. Every child also has the right to have secondary education and technical education.

— Courtesy Grassroots ADAB quarterly

grants will be used to target assistance to those who need help and thereby avoid creating pockets of "information haves and have nots."

"This important initiative reflects the administration's strong commitment to ensuring that every American has the opportunity to enter the Information Age," he said.

Projects in inner cities and remote rural areas are at the top of the administration's list for help because such projects tend to be the least attractive for investments by private firms building advanced telecommunication networks.

Grants will be awarded after a competitive merit review process. A review board made up of educators, health-care experts, government officials and others will select the winning projects and their share of the grant money.

NTIA will provide up to 50 per cent of the total cost of a proposed project and grant recipients will be required to

private companies to partner with these groups by providing additional resources and technical assistance that will further enhance communications projects.

The success of the programme "will depend on the active participation of the private sector as well as state and local governments," Brown said.

NTIA expects the level of competition for the grants to be extremely high. The agency has been receiving as many as 150 phone calls a week from local communities and institutions expressing interest in the programme.

Congress appropriated \$26 million for the grant programme in fiscal year 1994. The administration has proposed making another \$100 million in matching grants available for fiscal year 1995, which begins in October. That request is subject to congressional approval.

— USIS

## University Reforms Prepare Nepal for 21st Century

by Jan Sharma

In an apparent bid to catch up with the rest of the world by improving the quality of her human resource, Nepal has embarked on an ambitious plan to reform its higher education system.

The reforms are aimed at developing and maintaining a university system capable of preparing people to meet the demands of the 21st century. Main beneficiary of the reforms will be the Tribhuvan University, Nepal's oldest, which is synonymous with higher education in the country.

University education in the Himalayan kingdom suffers from chronic under-financing, extremely low internal resource mobilization, and little cost-sharing by the different campuses.

Decision-making is highly centralized and campuses lack the authority to bring about the changes they desire.

In Nepal, unlike in most countries, university education is far cheaper than primary education. Low tuition and other fees make the University highly dependent on government grants which meet 90

per cent of its expenses, mainly staff salaries, leaving little for the pursuit of excellence.

Tribhuvan, which was set up in 1959, now has 195 campuses, about 130 of them private, with a total enrolment of 155,000 students. Some 80 per cent of the enrollees are in humanities, social sciences, management and law and only about 10 per cent in engineering, forestry, agriculture and medicine.

But about two-thirds of Tribhuvan's undergraduate population would only be attending secondary schools (grades 11 and 12) in most other countries. Moreover, degrees earned from the University are often not recognized in many other countries.

Acknowledging the importance of quality higher education if Nepal is to be a truly competitive participant in the international economy, current reform efforts are designed to raise Tribhuvan's academic standards and avert a crisis in university education. Whether or not they succeed will, of course, depend on how far the

government will be willing to back them up but the initiatives have already earned the support of some international organizations.

A US \$20 million credit from the International Development Association, the World Bank's affiliate for concessional lending, is helping fund some of the reforms being pursued. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is providing technical assistance in improving the education system.

UNDP also funded a 21-month study which complemented the World Bank's US \$599,000 Basic and Primary Education Project launched in April 1992. The Bank has also provided US \$39.8 million for four other educational projects which also aim to improve higher education in Nepal.

The latest proposed reforms would promote much-needed systematic changes in the university's administrative, financial and management procedures. Activities designed to help institutional development, decentralization of management authority, and

strengthening of campus-level management will be undertaken.

Most important, curricula for the bachelor's and master's degree programmes will be revised. The existing University curricula, it was decided, were outdated and not relevant to Nepal's present and future needs.

In addition, the centralized student examination system will be simplified and classroom instruction improved. One more year is also going to be added to the University's bachelor's degree programme to bring it closer to international standards.

As part of the reform efforts, a law was enacted recently which assigns Certificate-level studies to secondary education. The University and the Ministry of Education and Culture have jointly developed a policy for its implementation. But Grades 11 and 12 will be developed jointly by the Council for Higher Secondary Education and the University so that the existing Certificate level can eventually be phased out.

— Depthnews Asia

## Restructuring Education for a Post-Apartheid South Africa

by M Liaquat Ali Khan

During nearly three and a half centuries of white minority rule in South Africa, both the Dutch and British descendant rulers consciously remained indifferent to the education of the indigenous people. The Dutch established a settlement at the Cape in 1652 and gradually expended the borders of the settlement. Later, the British captured the Cape from the Dutch in 1795. Since then, there were many violent incidents and wars between the two white ethnic groups. Following the Anglo-Boer war, in the early twentieth century, the Dutch, who took the name Afrikaner, and the British compromised on the issues of language, culture, education, economy and politics at the expense of the indigenous people. The whites believed in their ethnic supremacy over the indigenous people in South Africa.

The indigenous people of South Africa had no formal education system before the arrival of the white settlers. They learned from nature and their elders. The knowledge of an ethnic group would be handed down in oral tradition from generation to generation.

The system of native education in South Africa originated in the religious zeal of missionaries. The Dutch established a school at Cape Town in 1656 to bring the benefits of Christianity to the natives. This was the first school in South Africa. The second school was opened after seven years in 1663. Gradually, the churches began to establish schools everywhere. Both the white and black children were taught at these schools.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the mis-

sonary established an entirely different set of native schools specifically for the blacks. Until the mid-nineteenth century, the government did not provide any financial support or official recognition to those schools, and therefore, most of them were in deplorable conditions. They were generally held in church buildings and, in most cases, there were no arrangements for seats and desks. Missionaries were fully responsible for the education of the indigenous people. In the 1910s, all but three of the several thousand native schools were conducted by missionaries.

The occupation of the land of indigenous people by the white settlers, had a destabilizing effect on the populations. This often caused unrest which resulted in a series of wars during 1835 to 1843. With a view to pacifying the indigenous people, the South African minority white government designed a plan in 1851 for educating the Africans. Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape, in 1855 said to parliament: "If we leave the natives beyond our border ignorant barbarians, they will remain a race of troublesome marauders. We should try to make them a part of ourselves, with a common faith and common interests, useful servants, consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue."

The white government of South Africa passed the Bantu Education Act in 1953. The aim of Bantu Education was to meet the development plans of apartheid. In 1948, the National Party came to power,

The African children learned at schools that whatever African is inferior. The South African concept of theology is that the dominant-subordinate relationship between whites and blacks is Divinely ordained; to alter this arrangement is to defy God.



Photo: Rafiqur Rahman/Development Features

and introduced the policy of apartheid which created the ideas that the population of South Africa comprised four racial groups — White, Coloured, Indian and African — each with its own inherent culture.

The Bantu Education Act was introduced in 1954. It required all schools for Africans to be registered with the government. Before 1953, the mission schools provided almost all of the schooling which was available for the blacks. The missionaries operated those schools without much intervention from the government. The school buildings were owned by the missionaries and it became necessary for them to spend a considerable amount of money from their own funds to run their schools. Bantu Education Policy brought all the schools under the direct control of the government. As a result, "almost all of mission schools closed down. So did most night schools."

The pre-industrial economy of South Africa could be well served by the illiterate labour force; however, for the post industrial economy a minimum level of literacy was required. Therefore, the apartheid government introduced Bantu education in order to produce a semilliterate working force to meet the needs of the South African expanding economy and to prepare people to staff subordinate positions in the South African social and political hierarchy.

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dominant-subordinate relationship between whites and blacks is Divinely ordained; to alter this arrangement is to defy God.

In South Africa the schools for white children are provided with all the modern facilities of education while the schools for indigenous children are non-conducive to learning. There are problems of large classes and poorly

qualified teachers in the black schools. These schools lack text books, libraries, laboratories and various teaching aids, desks and adequate play grounds.

The Bantu Education Policy fragmented the South African non-white population. It was extended to the university level also. Five university colleges were established for different non-white ethnic

groups. The main objectives of these institutions were to produce a set of people who would manage ethnic institutions in homelands and gradually fill a few middle-management positions.

The Bantu Education Policy created widespread dissatisfaction among the non-white population since its inception. The African National Congress and its associated organizations of the Congress Alliance (the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People's Organization, and the [White] Congress of Democrats) launched a campaign on May 8, 1954, against the Bantu education policy.

The struggle against apartheid education took a widespread violent form in the 1970s. In June 1976, the Sweto students burst into a revolt protesting the use of Afrikaans as a language of instruction. The police used massive force against the revolting students. Over 360 students were killed — many of them teenagers. Steve Biko, a medical student, who formulated an all-black movement, was beaten to death by Security Police while he was in detention in 1977.

In 1979, the Education and Training Act was passed to replace the Bantu Education Act of 1953; but the education for Africans virtually remained the same. The discriminatory education system of the apartheid government has contributed nothing to empowering the indigenous people for participating in the social, political and economic affairs of the country.

available to all learners; there must be a balance between commonality and diversity in education; individual learners should have freedom of choice. The curriculum should be relevant and take cognisance of the personpower needs of the country; There must be a positive linkage between formal and non-formal education; There must be an acceptable relationship between state and parental responsibilities for formal education; both the state and the private sector are responsible for non-formal education; state support for private education must be adequate; there must be a healthy balance between administrative centralization and decentralization; acknowledgement of the professional status of educators is essential; and the provision of education should be based on continuing research.

The group found discrepancies in the existing education system mainly because it was based on racism. It has been recommended that the future education of South Africa should be non-racial and it must ensure provision for the following objectives: One democratic, nonracial education system; equal education opportunities and the elimination of backlogs in education; relevant education at all levels; wide-ranging learning opportunities by means of extensive distance education, better use of education technology and liaison between the vocational training sector and the formal education; basic education, especially for illiterate adults; opportunities for lifelong education; greater management autonomy for education institutions; suitable education for children with special education needs. To Be Continued