"To Acquire Knowledge"

ECENTLY I attended an interesting meeting arranged by BHS. In the meeting Md. Irshadul Haque he Education Secretary, spoke as the chief guest and Dr Shamsher Ali, the Vice Chancellor of the Open University made his thoughtful presidential remarks on improving the quality of education of the country. I could not agree with the Education Secretary more when he said in his address about his 3 point formulae on the purpose of education. namely: to acquire knowledge. to learn and practise moral vaiues and to do a respectable job to support himself and his fam-

After having explained the purpose of education, the Secretary regretfully said that none of the above objectives is being realized under the exist ing educational system and yet. he pointed out, that the IQ of young Bangladeshi students as judged by the American Company installing the "OPTICAL MARK READER" computerized system for use in SSC and HSC examinations is high compared to many coun-

Obviously then, as he analyzed the situation, the fault lay not with the students but with the system and method used in our country to impart education to our students. The question arises: how we should approach to find a satisfactory solution of this complicated problem under our limited resources.

Before we come up with any solution let us analyze what led to the downfall of our standard of education. Dr Shamsher Ali offered a very convincing explanation for this downhill trend. tie said that the competition among schools and students for capturing one of the 20 top most positions in HSC and SSC examination is very acute because they get state recognition; the news of their success is flashed in national dailies, radio and television; on top of that they get award from the Prime Minister.

Obviously, a student would not like to miss such a golden opportunity of earning fame. Naturally to earn that unique distinction he would go to any length such as engaging as many house tutors as there are subjects to learn the technique of answering, and adopt any other means to score highest possible marks in every subject rather than acquiring knowl-

In our childhood we were told that the best teachers are those who can create an urge among their students to acquire knowledge but now a teacher is supposed to train students in the art of answering questions. not help them acquire knowledge. While most of the students in an English medium

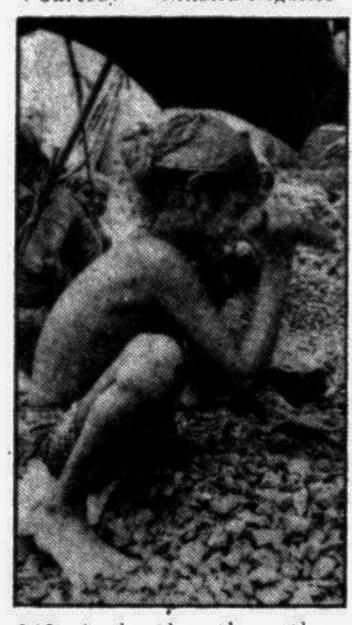
by AS Islam

school develop an urge to acquire knowledge, his counterparts, barring exceptions, would not read a book unless he has

The majority of students of Bengali medium would rely on note-books. They are reluctant even to consult a dictionary to look up the meaning of a word. When the question of learning



Hard facts of life. Courtesy - Shishu Digonto



Life is harder than these stones. Courtesy

- Shishu Digonto Bengali on the part of an English medium school student comes, he also behaves the same way, i.e. he does not know how to consult a Bengali

dictionary to look up the

meaning of a Bengali word. What contributed to the success of the people of the old generation? The main reason is that there was no scope to memorize either in English or in Bengali be it language or literature. As a result examinees had to read all the important pieces of literature prescribed for that particular examination.

in the meantime what can be

done is contained in the suggestion offered by Dr Shamsher Ali in that meeting. The later suggested that the merit lists for the first twenty students published by four boards be discontinued forthwith. In support of his proposal, he said that neither London University nor Cambridge University declares a candidate's position; they only mention the grade instead of the mark obtained by a candidate in the subjects he is examined. Dr Ali remarked that when none objects to this system which is in operation in Bangladesh for over 20 years why should there be any objection if the four boards switch over to the London University system? As a matter of fact, all over the United States the merit of students is graded on the same basis as in London University. In our country the four boards can also publish the names of successful candidates under different divisions in an alphabetical order and not according to the marks obtained by them.

To find a suitable job after the completion of a self-contained course. I have a suggestion to make, and that is to keep the boys and girls busy in income generation projects like repair of tube wells teaching in schools, learning dress making. book binding, carpentry during the time when they finish their SSC and HSC examinations and the announcement of their results. In fact, they may be engaged to learn various skills during summer and "Ramadan" vacation.

The Open University can play a vital role in opening courses on various skills through radio and television and arranging practical classes in the middle and the end of each course. Similar courses are offered very successfully by Open University of Britain; a few years back some British expert came to the Botany Department, Dhaka University to help in the establishment of the Tissue Culture Laboratory.

When he did a fine job using a combination of local and imported material, I casually asked him the name of the institute where he received his technical education. He said. "Strange might it seem to you but the fact is that I got my technical education degree from Open University. The students of each course are taken to different polytechnic institutes during summer vacation and there they were taught the

Similar arrangement may be made here also and I don't think there will be any lack of assistance from donor countries, to implement such a useful project.

Education **Briefs**

Educating Cities

OW cities can improve H education and promote a broader understanding betw een people of different cultures will be highlighted at the Third Congress of Education Cities, taking place in Bologna Italy, from 10-12 November 1994. The meeting will focus on multi-culturalism and discuss themes ranging from excluston and marginality in ci ties to ways of encouraging creativity and integration. UNESCO's international programme on street children will be among the educational concerns presented in ten workshops. Initiated by Barcelona in 1990, the concept of "Educating Cities" has grown into a worldwide network of 100 urban centres that exchange experiences on how to promote a positive learning environment for children and voung people.

The Sound of Success

choir of former Ecua-A dorian street children showed off their talents at UNESCO in June with a programme of traditional Latin American songs and Beethoven's Ode to Joy. Thanks to Obra de Promocion para la Educacion en el Mundo (OPAM), an Ecuadorian NGOs. they are now off the streets. following an education and performing regularly. For more information on UNESCO's education programme for street children, please contact Alphonse Tay, (address in box p

Staging Issues 7 ILLAGE-based theatre, an

V ancient c ultural t radition in Papua New Guinea, has turned into a powerful medium for getting educational and health messages across in a nation that counts more than 860 different languages, and where 65 per cent of youths have had no or little schooling. Several years ago, unemployed youths started to perform plays aimed at raising awareness on health, family planning, the environment and human rights. Their efforts led to the birth of the Awareness Community Theatre Network (ACT), under the umbrella of the Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific. The programme, presently comprising twenty-one local theatre groups in seventeen provinces. has worked with the Department of Health on several projects, including one on

HIV/AIDS that reached more than 84,000 people in rural areas. In performances, actors use a wooden phallic symbol to demonstrate the use of condoms, since censorship forbids any pictorial instructions from being included in condom packets. In workshops. ACT trains community drama groups to raise aware ness through stage perfor mances

Southern Asia: Sharing EFA Experiences

D EPRESENTATIVE from A six countries of southern Asia met in Bangladesh to exchange experiences on innovative approaches in the field of basic education for girls and women, during a workshop convened by UNESCO's "EFA-Making it Work" project from 28 May to June. Participants from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Thailand stressed the importance of training the local community to identify problems in the field of basic education, propose solutions and participate in the implementation of projects. Programmes work best when a climate of confidence prevails among various partners and a clear distribution of responsibilities at various levels is spelt out. Lack of information at lower government levels about national plans and strategies was identified as an obstacle to effective collaboration. Participants underlined the need for relevant, gendersensitive curriculums and suggested that teachers, especially women, should be upgraded to play the role of development agents. They also stressed that in-service training could enhance teachers effectiveness in putting a child-centred approach into

Agency Action for Africa

N 16 and 17 June, re-O presentatives from five United Nations agencies, (UNDP. UNESCO, UNICEF UNFPA and the World Bank). as well as the Donors for African Education consortium, met in New York to fashion a concerted strategy to assist African countries in achieving important improvements in EFA: Over the next few months, the agencies will meet with African ministers to see how to put new approaches towards education into place.

Courtesy — UNESCO

Madagascar, where children are

considered gifts from God and

an honour to one's ancestors, a

dialogue with parents, feachers

and community leaders focused

on how to best insure the

child's well-being and hence,

that of future generations. By

analysing today's economic

context, parents gradually

recognized that children from

smaller families stood a better

chance of being well cared for

and educated. Their involve-

ment with teachers and

government authorities in

shaping the educational reform

played an important part in its

acceptance. "Population edu-

cation has the potential to help

alleviate school attrition · by

improving the quality of

education, especially when

parents are involved in the

programme and children and

teachers are visibly motivated,"

Courtesy - UNESCO

savs Sikes.

Private Tutoring: An Educational Malady

by Nazma Yeasmeen Haque

O the majority of the students, whether in school or college or in the upper levels, getting tutored in some form or other has become a must ascribing to it a look of an educational pilgrimage. This sounds all the more alarming when intelligent students capable of managing themselves scholastically are also found rushing to tutors along with the band-

A volley of questions can be raised in this regard. Why do not the students want to think and study by themselves? Why do they want the tutors to think and organize lessons for them? Why do most of the teachers prefer tutoring to teaching while the latter being their regular job? Why do parents/guardians worry about finding a good tutor as soon as their children are five year old or even earlier? Why are we allowing an educational system eat away the vital faculties of our children? It is undoubtedly a very complex problem.

Tutoring or coaching may be a temporary necessity for some students at a particular

ing a need of private tuition to the students.

Some teachers are known

to label students weak and therefore, unfit for the class. by contrast, the same students produce good results when tutored privately by the same teachers. While it is dubious to infer that the students were taught, it is axiomatic that readymade, prepared notes were lent to the students for memorization in the guise of tutoring which fetched them good marks. This is a normal practice among the teachers while they tutor privately. Since they earn much more from tutoring compared to the salaries drawn, they keep on neglecting the students in classes for attracting them to private tutoring. Spoonfeeding the students have grown on a massive scale, eating away the thinking ability of the students. In other words, tutors do not care if their students are losing their heads or not. A kind of intellectual sterility is thus grown and nurtured by tutors of which only they themselves

No investment in particular

are the beneficiaries.

running an institution in an unauthorized manner as a lucrative business. Concomitant to the examples set by such teachers of recent times are the temptations of the students to find an easy way out for performing well in the examinations which seeking readymade answers for committing them to memory. They have learnt to depend on tutors and prefer to do so however capable they themselves may be.

An obsession of tutors have engulfed the students community who shirk from working hard and exercising their mental faculties. Being young, the students are not conscious of the longterm effect of dependence on tutors thus losing confidence in their capabilities unknowingly. For appearing in public examinations or any other regular examinations. the students run to as many tutors as the number of subjects they have been studying. The students themselves

have often discovered that their teachers know magic as private tutors when lessons taught in institutions for long time. It therefore may origi- is needed for private tutoring two years remain quite incom-



Deprived and wretched, isn't education a must for them?

nate out of the felt need of the students but it cannot run parallel to regular feaching in educational institutions and that again for all and sundry. Nevertheless, the fact remains that tutoring has evolved into a necessity over the past decades engineered by teachers, students, parents/ guardians, educational institutions and their systems. One of the reasons behind

running to tutors is definitely inadequate number of educational institutions combining both in the public and private sectors for an ever increasing number of students which obviously means overcrowded classrooms, lack of attention to the needs of the students thus leaving them untaught.

In an overcrowded class where the teacher-student ratio is very low, any plan however well organized and method of teaching is bound to fail. This is very much commonsensical. Along with it, financial needs of the low paid teachers are also recognized as another reason prompting them to take to tutoring. But the crux of the problem of tutoring becomes obvious and exposes other potent factors responsible for it when seen in contrast to the situation mentioned so far.

Educational institutions having a manageable number of students in classes where teachers are also well-paid, the students are neglected and well-planned method is not applied for teaching let alone stimulating them. Therefore, normal teaching does not help the students learn which is purported to do so. Teachers thus want an easy way out in teaching that saves their time and energy indirectly suggest-

that mostly takes place in the drawing rooms or any other room of the house of the tutors. There is no register showing the number of students tutored, number of sessions and their duration, fees charged etc. The modes of tutoring as well as modes of payment by the students have become as bizarre as the fantastic amount earned by the tutors that remain an ever se-

A thing, possibly grown out of the need of the teachers, eventually turned into greed knows no bound now. Thus, a list of tutors for different subjects are readily available at the tip of the tongues of the students and also of parents, a list that can perhaps be now placed in the classified pages of a directory under essential or emergency service. The proliferation of coach-

ing or tutoring centres has metamorphosed the learning process into an educational disease with one of its manifestations being the ludicrous advertisements in the newspapers as if it is the panacea and therefore, the only way of making a good result. One can observe such centres sprouting. up here and there with fancy names and descriptions, some are also without signboards. Although there may not be a signboard, the place is conspicuous by the coming and going of a whole lot of students over seven days a week. It has been heard recently that some people running tutorials or coaching centres on a large scale living within the compound of an institution of higher education have been notified by the authority not to do so in their respective quar ters which definitely smacks of

Courtesy - Shishu Digonto prehensible but while in coaching same lessons are dished out to them in fully prepared form in only six months time or even less than that. Even the bright students become so guilible that they fear they may miss something very important if they do not pay a visit to the tutors. This way the baneful influence of tutoring goes on unabated.

A situation like this in the sphere of education is an academic crime committed jointly by us and our society that has been fast degenerating itself into an undestined goal.

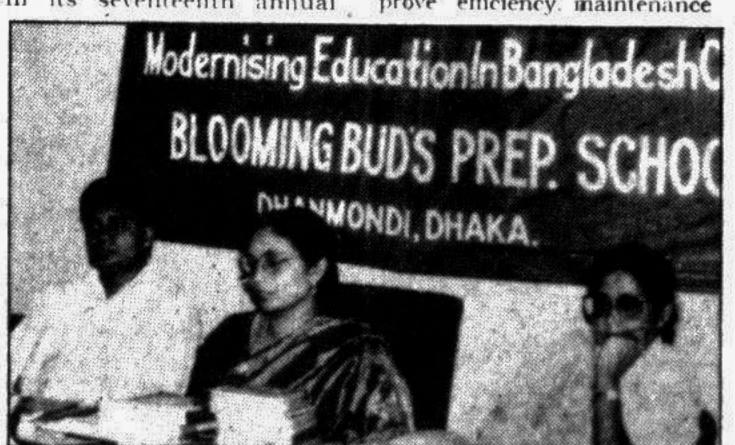
A complex situation that has put us in quandary has arisen from poor quality of teaching, stereotyped examination systems. Teachers craftily deprive students in classes insinuating a need for private tutoring. Under the circumstances, the following suggestions are made to ameliorate the situation:

Number of educational institutions at least up to HSC level must be increased manifold, both in the public and private sector.

Quality control in education must be given the top priority supervised by an efficient authority where the policy of reward and punishment must be applied judiciously whether in government or private institutions. Examination systems need to be revamped. Only professionally committed teachers should come to teaching. Morality must be upheld in education at any cost. Tutoring done either individually or in a body on a large scale must be required to be registered with some appropriate authority because of its very commercial nature.

World Bank Development Report

World Development Report the World Bank examines the record in infrastructure provision and suggests ways to broaden the focus of policy beyond increasing the quantity of infrastructure facilities to improving the quality and efficiency of services. The Report recommends restructuring subsidies so that they reach the poor more effectively and identifies several ways to improve efficiency, maintenance



Blooming Buds Prep School in the city recently held a seminar on Modernising Education in Bangladesh Context with Sohail Akhtar Panna, principal, senior section in the chair.

and cost recovery, namely by a free market-style overhaul of public projects, improved competition and giving users a

Quality Pre-Schools

say in the way enterprises are

MPROVING pre-school quality in developing countries is the main motivation of the German-based Peter-Hesse Foundation. In Haiti, the initiative runs a Montessori pre-school project: via a teacher-training centre set up in 1986, 206 young Haitian educators have completed a one-year course leading to a Montessori pre-school teacher's diploma. Twenty-two pre-schools for poor children are successfully working with the help of these teachers. The initiative is looking for international partners to work out the best educational concepts and methods for increasing quality and expanding preschool education in developing countries. For more information Peter-Hesse Foundation. Otto-Hahn-Str 2, Erkrath, Germany.

Academic Feat



ABEEL Sami, a freshman IN majoring in electrical engineering at the University of Rochester, has been named to the Spring 1994 Dean's List for academic achievement. This is his second consecutive distinction as he was on the Dean's List for Fall 1993 as well. The University of Rochester

is one of the most distinguished universities in the Northeast of the US. Approximately 4,900 undergraduates are enrolled in its humanities, sciences and engineering programs. Students who have distinguished themselves academically are nominated to the Dean's List.

Population Education Comes of N Zambia. Grade 1 ducing different teaching and Population education aims to In Latin America and the national campaigns to involve a convince learners that they can students draw, their learning methods that stimulate Caribbean region, current conbroad cross section of participants in the reform. In

family tree, explore their environment, learn about personal cleanliness and common diseases, and discuss their responsibilities at home and school. During their first six years of study, children are exposed to a gamut of current issues, ranging from population growth and gender discrimination to HIV/AIDS and environmental degradation. At the same time they participate in community development programmes and outline possible solutions to problems facing their society

Currently in it testing phase. this revised curriculum aims to make education more relevant to the lives and surrounding of students. Like, some 100 countries around the world that have recognized the critical links between population, environment and development, the programme introduces population issues into the mainstream curriculum.

In the past, primary school age children were sometimes considered too young for exposure to population concepts, but it is now widely recognized that attitudes and beliefs are formed early in life and can be influenced by education starting at a young age," says O J Sikes, chief of the Education. Communication and Youth Branch at the UNFPA. Viet Nam has taken a lead by exposing kindergarten children to concepts such as family size through drawing, story telling, games and dances, while their parents attend classes on health and other matters related to childcare, human sexuality and reproduction.

At the First International Congress on Population Education organized by UNESCO and UNFPA last year in Istanbul, ninety-three countries adopted an action framework detailing strategies and measures to ensure that education systems pay greater attention to population issues. According to UNFPA's Executive Director, Dr Nafis Sadik, the Congress marked the "coming of age of population education," which has become "one of the most popular education innovations of our time."

control many of the events in their lives, including those related to reproductive behaviour. "It is very important that young children learn that they can have a degree of control over some aspects of their lives, and that childbearing is one of them," says Sikes. By exploring concerns closely related to pupils surroundings, such as

students's expression and creativity, and promote critical reflection, decision-making and problem-solving. To put these participatory methods into action, teachers need to received adequate training and teaching materials. In Niger and Togo for example, teachers follow distance training on population education for five to six months

cerns are to expand coverage. modernize population education content and design evaluation techniques. The majority of African countries have developed strategies to introduce population education into the formal system. To further improve coordination in the area of population, environment and preventive education. UNESCO

family size, sexuality, health and nutrition, human rights and responsibility as well as ecology, population education also helps boys and girls to develop more positive attitudes and values vis-a-vis gender.

Integrating population education into the mainstream curriculum is often a difficult and slow process. "The very complexity and nature of the questions studied make their integration into school programmes all the more difficult," says Josyanne Blanchard, a UNESCO programme specialist. New concepts are introduced into subjects such as biology (sexuality), history (patterns of human settlement), geography (the environment) and civic education (human rights), requiring textbook revisions and teacher training.

Modernizing the curriculum goes hand-in-hand with intro-

before attending a week-long inservice training session. It is estimated that approximately 6,000 teachers in French and Portuguese-speaking countries have already benefited from inservice training.

Experience shows that the introduction of population education requires action by highlevel policy makers and planners. Over the past twenty years, UNFPA and UNESCO have invested in building up regional and national expertise. Asia was the first region to accept the idea of an intervention in population matters as a deliberate part of policy. Today. most of the area's national population education projects are primarily staffed by personnel trained in all aspects of population education work, while regional workshops have concentrated on developing appropri-

ate curricular materials.

has earmarked funds for an inter-disciplinary and interagency project called "Environment and Population Education and Information for Human Development."

Theatre, competitions, posters and the mass media are often used to mobilize communities around population issues. In Peru, a major daily newspaper carried a weekly insert on population issues, which helped to build a broad base of support for broaching the subject in school. There is also a constant need to update and renew population education programmes in light of evidence from scientific and social research and emerging social problems. like adolescent fertility and AIDS for example.

Because population education dealts with sensitive issues. some countries have organized

LTHOUGH developing co-A untries invest \$200 billion a year in new infrastructure. one billion people in the developing world still lack access to clean water and nearly 2 billion lack adequate sanitation. In its seventeenth annual