

# Telecommunications, Education and Development

by Dr Mahbub-ul-Haque

THE Human Development Index (HDI), developed by UNDP in order to measure the level of development of a nation is based on three principal variables. These are longevity, knowledge and decent living standards.

Life expectancy at birth, has been taken as a proxy for longevity, and adult literacy for knowledge. Improved standard of living, depends on command over resources like land, credit, income and other variables.

It is evident from the above, that education has direct contribution on HDI, i.e., the level of development of a nation. Adult literacy directly depends on the level and system of education of a nation; educated people maintain a healthier life and live longer for obvious reasons. Education also opens opportunity for individuals to have increased command over resources. Therefore, education plays a vital role in national development.

means of any electromagnetic system (electrical transmission by wire, radio transmission, optical transmission etc. or a combination of such systems." Therefore, telegraphy, telephony, broadcasting, television, telex, data communication, facsimile, etc., are all included in telecommunications.

And what is Education? According to the encyclopedia published by Longman, education is a process involving the acquisition of experience and knowledge, formally in school or informally in other social contexts.

Hefinrich Pestalozzi said education is "the natural progressive harmonious development of all powers and faculties of the human being." John Dewey, one of the leading scholars in the field of education, said education is an indispensable social process and a means for the progress of human society.

All education must proceed by the "participation of the individual in the activities and the purposes of the society." It is a process which preserves and develops civilization. According to Dewey it is "the process of reconstruction of experience, giving it a more socialized value through the medium of increased individual efficiency."

These definitions differ from traditional ones. This education is started at birth and continues upto death. It is not a preparation for life but life itself.

Now, telecommunications, as a means of information transfer, provides facilities to transmit educational information to different places. Thus telecommunication may supplement the traditional methods of educating people. In fact, telecommunication technologies and systems can be used to educate students in the classroom, adults at home and train workers and field staff at their work places. Telecommunications possibly is the best method to supplement traditional programs.

Telecommunication based programs are more suitable for continuing education. It is suitable for keeping working personnel, particularly those dealing with technology, at par with the latest develop-

ments. The working personnel usually have little opportunity to take refresher courses or discuss new techniques once they return to the field after training, as most agencies in developing countries provide only limited continuing education. However, telecommunications systems may be used to offer continuing education, either directly as a medium for interactive instruction or as support for workers studying on their own. Audio conferencing systems are especially useful for instruction. Two-way radio telephone systems generally have a few channels that are shared by many locations, each using the channel in turn or at scheduled intervals. Although such systems lack privacy, they allow rural workers at all stations to listen, participate, and learn.

In the area of distance education, telecommunications system have already proved its worth. Satellite technology can reach distant learners at their workplaces, at schools or at home irrespective of their locations. In case of distance education, too, telecommunication media is extensively used along with the traditional media like books, papers, mail, audio and video cassettes and occasional meetings of the students and teachers.

The satellite based audio-conferencing network is used to administer extension service activities and courses, offer tutorials for students taking correspondence course and extend outreach services to the people of the region through, for example, consultation, inservice training and seminars offered by development agencies. The benefits of this experimental network have been significant. The savings in travel time and costs have been at least ten times the cost of using the network. Dropout rates of correspondence students in course with effective satellite tutorials have also been reduced.

community development by the different countries of the world. An effort has been made in the following paras to project some of the cases of telecommunication based education in the different developed and developing countries of the world. This may be valuable models for the other countries particularly Bangladesh in order to increase access to education and training to their population.

University offers graduate courses in engineering and computer science via satellite to employees at their work places throughout the country.

In addition to the above, continuing education programs are also distributed to homes via satellite. The learning channel is one example. This channel provides education facilities to the small communities in the so-

lated areas. The learning channel now disseminate adult education channel via satellite to local cable television system throughout the United States.

In Australia, similar programs are going on since long. With the introduction of the domestic satellite system the Distance Education Program in Australia has by now expanded to a considerable extent.

An organisation titled 'Knowledge Network' diverts educational programs for credit to isolated communi-

ties in British Colombia. These programs are again retransmitted over cable system or viewed at community centres and colleges. An audio conferencing link enables students to interact with instructors located in the big cities. In Peru, seven rural communities were linked via satellite and very high frequency radio to the national telecommunication network.

This conferencing feature was later included in a much expanded network.

Telecottages are located in schools, libraries, local government buildings and coffee shops. The Telecottages contain an office, classroom, meeting room and work facilities as well as small kitchen. Telecottages have personal computers, printers, telephones, a facsimile machine and a video equipment. Tele cottage service could include word processing and desktop publishing, book-keeping for small businesses and training and continuing education both in the use of the technologies and in other topics available on computer disks or video tapes or via teleconferencing.

The Tele-cottage helps the local community to counter act disadvantages, if any, which may affect them. As for example, a small businessman in a small area might have to suffer for lack of information, training, large distance from the markets and other factors. Telecottages which provide easy and cheap access to telecommunication and information technologies may enable him to overcome the barriers. It also serves as a facilitator, computer consultant and trainer and development centres. There are approximately twenty five telecottages in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

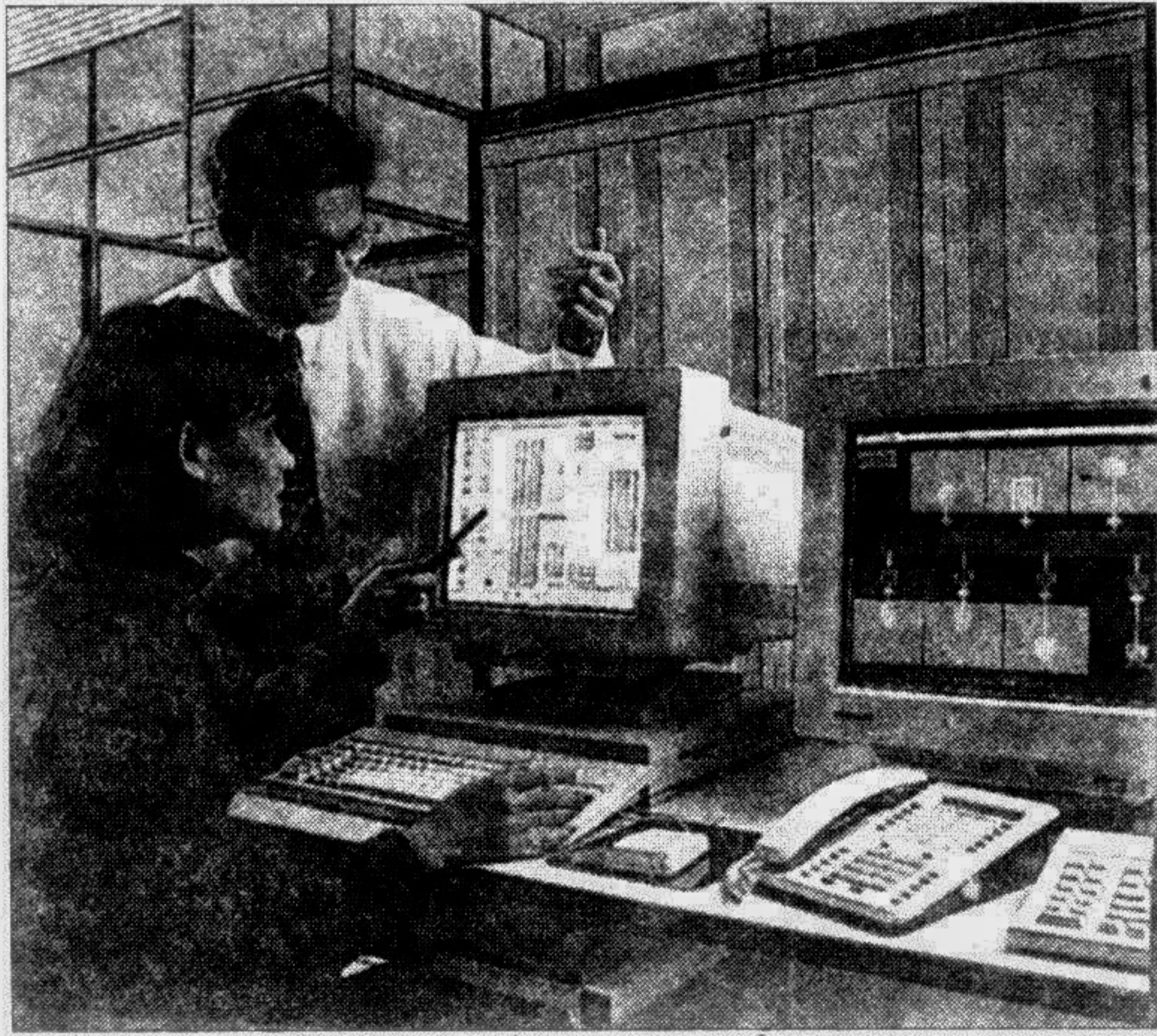
of development. No country in the world shall be identified as developed country unless it can make its population educated. This is necessary not only from the social point of view but from the economic considerations as well. But the level of education in Bangladesh is far behind even in spite of repeated efforts. The country is to go a long way to educate all her people.

The above pages have projected in brief the role of telecommunications in the educational development. Besides, the practices of using telecommunications for educating people in the developed as well as in a few developing nations of the world have also been presented in the paper.

Bangladesh has already started using telecommunications including radio and television for educating her people. But the use is still at a minimum level. The reason behind may be many. But the major ones are her inadequate telecommunication infrastructure on the one hand and inappropriate planning to use tele-communications on the other. But these barriers are to be over in the greater interest of the national development.

In view of the above, the first requirement is to conceptualize, in reality by the authorities concerned, the role of telecommunications in helping expansion of the education system. And, then to attach appropriate priority to the telecommunication sector. At a later stage, the countries tele-network need to be planned and developed keeping also this particular aspect into consideration, in addition to the existing ones. As a matter of fact, in order to implement the proposals there should be fundamental research at the aggregate level on the one hand and on the other at the sectoral level too, covering particularly the education and telecommunication sectors for obvious reasons.

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tion. In the United States, educational television programs are delivered to schools and workplaces via satellites. Participants may interact with the instructor using free telephone lines. A satellite network, based in Texas offers courses available all over the country particularly in the schools of the remote areas. These schools which are unable to offer courses of various types on their own can now offer these due to the introduction of the system. The National Technological

Conclusion  
It needs no mention that education is the prime mover

**Role of Telecommunications in Educational Development**  
Telecommunications means communication over distance. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) defines telecommunications as "any process that enables a correspondent to pass to one or more given correspondents, or possible correspondents, information of any nature delivered in any usable form (written or printed matter, fixed or moving pictures, words, music, visible or audible signals, signals controlling the functioning of mechanism etc.) by

SOME months back, one of the lead stories on the front page of 'The Daily Star' (16 May 1995) made for interesting reading. In the story it was reported that the US government in their new vision and wisdom had classified Bangladesh as "high risk high fraud" country because of large scale visa complications. If this new label was not so unfortunate and unjust, it would be amusing for the US to call Bangladesh a "HRHF" country. It is a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

The US is the country that is home of serial killers, rampant and uncontrolled gun violence, drive by shooting, letter bombs and bombing of public and private buildings — such crimes have never been heard of in Bangladesh. The images of Waco massacre, the World Trade Centre and Oklahoma bombing are still too fresh in people's memory to think of the US as anything if not a violent country. In this violence, even unwary tourists have not been spared. A few years ago over 40 foreign tourists were followed, robbed and killed in Florida. One need not be very smart to figure it out which is the high risk country.

## High Risk, High Fraud!

by Sharmee Mahmud



As far as fraud is concerned, Bangladesh practitioners of this art are still children compared to their US counterparts. In recent years many a mega fraud has been carried out in America by even movers and shakers of the society and helped on by influential law makers. Examples abound: one is the Lincoln Savings fiasco where billions of dollars of depositors' funds were lost reportedly because of outright fraud by Charles Keating, the company president. Later, Senator Cranston, a long time and highly respected California Senator and other officials of state and federal bank regulatory bodies attempted to rescue Charles Keating and bank officials from legal prosecution and the bank from going under.

Mr Neil Bush, son of President Bush, was involved in a savings bank (Siverado Savings and Loan) scam which cost the taxpayers over a billion dollar. Even, unfortunately though, President Clinton's name has become entangled with a real estate and savings bank scam (White Water) in Arkansas.

In the past there has been many allegations that the US in the name of giving food and humanitarian aid, have exported low quality rice and

deaths in Bangladesh and subsequently the country becoming a "bottomless basket". A reading of Chapter 32 of Seymour M Hersh's book, 'The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House' and also Marvin and Bernard Kalb's Kissinger biography will confirm this.

Henry Kissinger, an immigrant from Germany, who lost 12 members of his family in the Nazi death camps had no feeling or compassion in his heart when Yahia Khan unleashed his brutal army on the Bangladeshis. Both Nixon and Kissinger were in a position to stop the genocide but they decided not to do so as they thought their effort to build bridges with China lay in the hands of the Pakistanis.

The era of the Nixon administration was one of the most ignominious, immoral and evil not only for the US but also for the rest of the world. The wickedness of Nixon/Kissinger foreign policy knew no bounds. Nixon and Kissinger not only decimated Vietnam but also ruthlessly ravaged Cambodia. In the early seventies they engineered a plot to have the elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile overthrown and when he came back to power again in 1973 — allegations are that they had him murdered in the guise of a military coup.

(Chapter 22: Seymour M Hersh — Kissinger in the Nixon White House).

The United States is not alone in giving Bangladesh uncomplimentary and damaging labels. It was a common practice by our fellow "Islamic Ummah" countries in the ME to refer to Bangladesh as a "miskin country" and our citizens as "miskins". They may call us "miskins" now but only a generation ago even their royal families subsisted on Haj tax derived mainly from miskin countries. No one can say that the situation might not be reversed again when the oil runs out.

If the United States is truly a friend of Bangladesh then it would stop maligning the country and investigate and identify the people who perpetrate these elaborate schemes to obtain US visas by fraud. This is specially very important now as Bangladesh is coming out of the ignominy of labels like "bottomless basket" and "miskin country". The country vitally needs a good image and reputation to attract investments — the key to economic development.

It would be fairly safe to say that the average Bangladeshi does not have the know-how, sophistication or even the language skill to obtain US visa by fraudulent means. For that matter, I believe, the average Bangladeshi

does not even aspire to go to the US. The people who obtain visa by false representation are perhaps knowledgeable about US visa regulations and also have financial resources and connections. Because of these people's misdeeds the whole nation has to suffer the indignity of being called a high fraud country. This is grossly unjust.

Also, some examples can be given to show why US visa regulations are not even handed when known criminals and even alleged murderers have obtained US visa and a safe haven in the "home of the brave and free", whereas genuine students with valid admission in good universities have failed to do so.

The case of a prominent opposition MP is well known in the country by now. A few years ago he was arrested for being the mastermind in the murder of one of his business associates — a prominent lawyer of Dhaka. Subsequently, as soon as the MP sahib was able to arrange his bail, he skipped bail and the country and went to live in the US.

There are also many other cases where individuals have committed major bank fraud or manpower business fraud and after illegally diverting the funds to the US or other Western countries have found shelter in those countries either in the guise of political asylum or on a business visa. In one interesting case, reportedly one individual even defrauded MIDAS — a USAID funded financial institution — of large amounts of money and then escaped with his entire family to America.

In this situation only a suggestion or a request can be offered to the concerned countries that they are more careful to whom they grant their precious visas and refrain from giving a bad name to Bangladesh as too much abuse and injustice has already been meted out to this country.

English Medium Schools are Not the Only Ones to be Blamed

by Rashaad Shabab

On its 22 August 1995 issue, The Daily Star presented findings of a survey done by the members of Teenage Awareness Group (TAG) on the knowledge of English medium students about their own origin and history. The conclusion was that the English medium schools are not doing enough to orient their students towards their roots. Journalists also interviewed Professor Kabir Chowdhury, Professor Anisuzzaman, Professor Sirajul Islam Chowdhury and Poet Shamsur Rahman. They are all very knowledgeable persons of our country. Their writings are immensely important in guiding us to the future. We all agree with their statements that for a country to become prosperous a strong sense of national pride is needed. Along with family, society, media, cultural organizations, the state and the educational organizations have a major role to play in this respect.

What surprises me is that they have only identified the English medium schools as the problem. I would argue that it is the failure of all organizations involved including the schools, both Bangla and English medium ones. Intellectuals have their own preoccupations, and are not writing authentic and interesting pieces on Bengali heritage for the young. The media and cultural organizations in many cases are giving us a biased image of our past history.

## English Medium Schools are Not the Only Ones to be Blamed

become the universal language, then can we afford the luxury of not having a good command over English.

Now I would like to share how our school helps us in getting to know our own roots. Every year we organise programmes on our National days, Independence day, Victory day, 21st February etc. We have three music teachers who teach us patriotic, *bhaqia*, *bhatali* songs after introducing the background of these songs. School authority takes us to historical sites at Comilla Shalbon Bihar, Sonargaon, Lalbagh Killa to get us acquainted with our heritage.

This year our school organised *Baishakhi meta* and took the initiative of bringing in artisans. *Kumors* (potters) showed us how they make clay pots with their wheels, while *tantis* (weavers) brought in their looms and weaved cloth. We also saw spinning wheels making thread from cotton, *Dheki*, *Gaichia* and *Nagordola* were also there. There were at least a score of food stalls serving Bengali dishes of all kinds, ranging from many types of *pithas* (*patishapta*, *pakta*, *bhapa*) to *aam bharta*, home made fruit drinks and on top, *panta bhat* with *bhajis* and *bhortas*. There were no western food stalls nor any western music! I must say that I am a proud Bangladeshi and a proud Sunbeamian.

The writer is a student of class VI.

NO, NO... DON'T PRONOUNCE "AT, AT" SAY, SHOREY-OUGH! SHOREY-YEAH!

OUR FLAG

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