

## FOCUS

## Sending Child Workers to School

Lipi, age 12, is proud of her progress at her school in Jhingatola. "I like it here," she says. "Now I know how to read and write. The teachers are good and read."

She, like the 7,990 other children who formerly worked in garment factories and who are now enrolled in school, are writing a new chapter in the history of the movement to end child labour and create learning opportunities for working children in Bangladesh.

January 21st marked the first year anniversary of the first school established to receive former child garment workers released from factories. So far 315 schools have been set up as part of the follow-up to the pioneering Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), UNICEF and ILO.

In implementation of the agreement, BGMEA, UNICEF and ILO conducted a joint survey from July to November 1995 to find out the actual number of child workers employed in the factories. The survey found that our nearly 1.2 million workers in the garment factories, most of them women, 10,547 were children under 14 years of age.

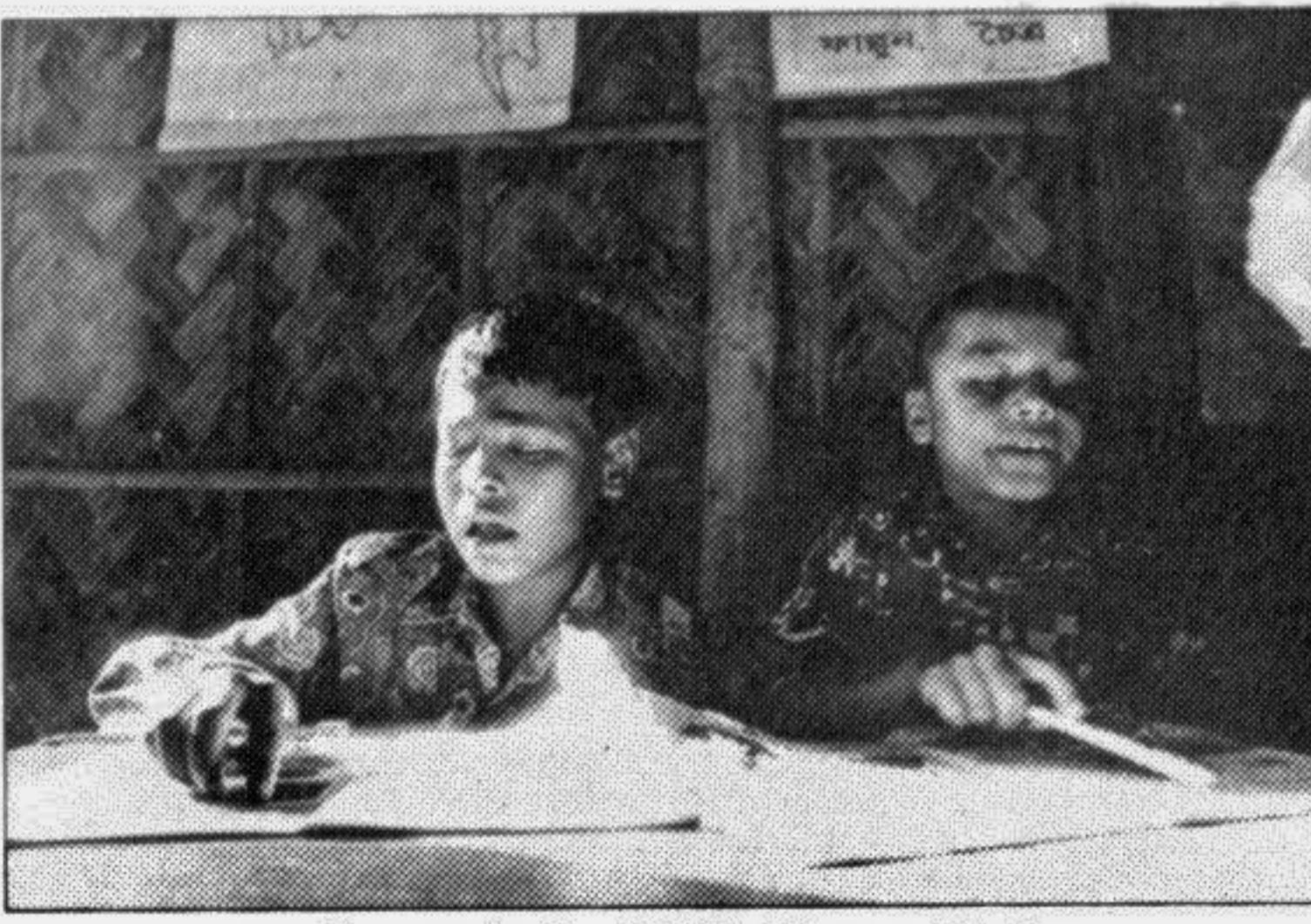
There were four key provisions formulated in the MoU: the removal of all under-age workers — those below 14 — by

October 1995; no further hiring of under-age children; the placement of those children removed from the garment factories in appropriate educational programmes with a monthly stipend; the offer of the children's jobs to qualified family members.

The MoU explicitly directed factory owners, in the best interests of these children, not to dismiss any child workers until a factory survey was completed and alternative arrangements could be made for the freed children.

The costs and tasks of implementation are being shared among the three MoU signatories and partner NGOs. BGMEA and ILO are financing the monthly stipends of Tk 300 given to enrolled children to help compensate their lost wages. The schooling is being funded by UNICEF, with schools set up and run by two partner NGOs — the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and Gono Shahjo Sangstha (GSS).

The schooling consists of a three-year curriculum. The students are free to return to work once they reach 14. But there are many who would like to continue their education, such



Garment school, GSS, Mirpur, Dhaka

**There are now 7,990 children enrolled in 315 schools. Some of the children found most recently (22 Sept., '96, 31 October, '96) in factories by joint verification team are not those enumerated in the original survey. Moreover, the implementing NGOs, BRAC and GSS have been approached by large numbers of children who formerly worked in garment factories but most of them have not come within the purview of survey. BRAC and GSS have allowed these children to attend school pending verification by the ILO/BGMEA.**

as Lipi. She says, "Given a chance, I would like to study more."

However, for many, the challenges they face are still considerable. When Bilal Hossain turned 14 in December, he immediately returned to his job at Anyanya Garments in Mirpur. "I wish I could continue my studies," he says. "But I have to work because my father is dead and eight members of my family depend on me."

Monitoring and verification visits by BGMEA, ILO and the Labour Directorate are continuing to ensure that garment factories no longer employ under-age workers. On 31 October 1996, the BGMEA declared that the garment industry was free of child labour, at a public event attended by the Secretary of Labour, the Representatives of UNICEF and ILO, and the US Ambassador.

"It's true that the garment industry at this moment is free from child labour," says Dr Monica Sharma, Officer-in-Charge of UNICEF Bangladesh. "But to sustain this it is important to keep a constant watch." Dr Sharma points out that the MoU initiative is an important step towards protecting the rights of children. The elimination of child labour from the

readymade garment industry in Bangladesh, and sending the child workers to school, have been the realisation of the rights of the child," she says.

ILO's project director, Mr Rijk Van Haarlem, is equally positive. "The programme is the first of its kind even in the world. This is a unique programme and deserves high appreciation."

Efforts are now being made to explore the possibilities of using the successes and lessons learned in the garment industry to other sectors.

Kazi Shafiqul Islam, vice president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), supports this initiative. "But there should be coordinated effort and children to be sent to schools be given adequate compensation through stipends and vocational training," he said.

Partners are also considering a credit programme for the families affected by the release of their children. ILO has concluded and agreement with the Social Investment Bank, which incorporates provisions for small-scale credit to families of children who were enrolled in school following their release from the garment factories.

All SAARC member-countries are committed to the elimination of hazardous child labour by the year 2000, and all forms of child labour by 2010.

News Network/UNICEF

## Student Politics — Pushing Education on a Road to Nowhere

by A H Luful Hassan

Bringing in conformity within the laws of society, the touch of education is essential. Put in another way, it means that educating its citizen for tomorrow should be the primary task of a nation. Nowadays, we cannot imagine even a single step advancement of society without education. A person can prove his patriotism by fighting the enemies of the country. One can also do this by performing deeds that would benefit the nation. In reality, there are very few who are fortunate enough to be able to perform either task for their nation.

We must understand and recognise that education is a slow but sure process of development of individual intellect and personality. To educate people for the future, the universities have been playing an important role since long. Hence the universities are called shrines of learning where thoughts of a nation are born and fostered. The tasks and responsibilities of a university is indeed boundless. This sense of responsibility must also underlie the approaches to problems of university administration and education. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said last December that there is no alternative to "Education for All" for socio-economic and political development. The commitment of our present government to eradicate illiteracy within 10 years emphasises the need for a uni-

versity standard of education in both public and private sectors. In keeping with this idea, the supervision, governing, management and inspection of an institution will also be freed from political interference.

However, what we observe in our topmost educational institutions, i.e. the universities, is detrimental student politics which, in truth, has damaged our standard of education almost beyond repair. Do we really want student politics in the educational institutions? Or do we prefer student politics to education? We must realise which comes first — student political and violence — student education and a congenital atmosphere for it. As a nation we have not been able to stand firmly on our feet even after 25 years of independence. Does anyone in our country realises it?

To make education a tool of development, we shall have to isolate politics from the university campuses. Some may argue that student politics should not be banned from educational institutions since it had a positive impact on our independence from the British in 1947 and from Pakistan in 1971. And who doesn't know of the great Language Movement of 1952? Even as late as in 1990, students played an important role in toppling the autocratic regime from power. We must not downplay the sacrifices of our students. However, my point is, since the students played an important role in establishing democracy, they should also

show how to practice it. Democracy, as we know, is of the people, by the people and for the people. More precisely, it implies the full participation of common people for the welfare of the nation. Time has come to build our nation without lapses of any more time and we can only start to do so when the population becomes literate.

Massive movements are already underway to educate every citizen of Bangladesh. There are four stages of education: primary, secondary, higher secondary and undergraduate/graduate or university level. All the stages are of equal importance for the students. So, no stage of education should be ignored. I would like to confine my discussion to university education or higher education since it is most affected by student politics and hence threatened.

Everywhere around the world education plays a vital role. It is known to us that the university should exist to propagate the life of reason, not to serve the purpose of any political group or cultural ideology on economic system. The core socio-cultural role of any university, worthy of the name, is to establish, cherish and perpetuate the process which extends the realm of reason in human affairs. Unfortunately, these kinds of goals and objectives cannot be realised in an environment dominated by unhealthy student politics and violence. In fact, a very small section of the student body is

involved in campus violence but the entire student population suffers because of them. In a survey among university students, it was found that about 83 students do not like student politics and violence in university or any educational institution. In a democracy, the majority rules, so we should concentrate on safeguarding the interests of the majority. Thus, the violent student politics should be dealt with sternly for the benefit of our nation.

Basically, education in Bangladesh is not very advanced. The prevailing system of education is not worth mentioning in comparison to the rest of the subcontinent. Previously, no significant initiative was taken on behalf of the government to improve the current unhealthy situation. In truth, the educational atmosphere and standard in all public universities of the country have become questionable. In Bangladesh, students attach value to a university education generally as a path to a career in the fastest possible way. The only conception in most students' minds is that higher education at the university level can be a safe and sure way of choosing a career according to the strength of their certificate. The home environment may develop intellectual curiosity to some degree but not when one is forced to do something he/she may not wish to pursue. The university is there to let them choose what they want to do and the only way that the uni-

versity can develop their minds is by making courses interesting and interactive. So the positivity of the university should not be a melting pot of homogeneous entities that estimate the value of higher education by two touchstones of examinations and career with nothing in between.

President Justice Shahabuddin said in his speech at the Jahangirnagar University convocation ceremony on 6 January, 1997 that our students had played glorious and commendable roles in all the political movements of the country. The President then noted with regret that the image of educational institutions has been tarnished now due to campus violence and that students carry weapons to the university instead of books. It is to be understood from reality that without education, widespread development at the national level is impossible. Therefore, we must take a vow to educate our people before stepping into the 21st century. For this, we will have to prepare a national education policy which, according to many, is long overdue.

From now onwards, no movement should slip by utilised. We have already wasted 25 years since our independence without formulating a proper plan of action. Alas! A quarter of a century has passed and we have little to show. Isn't it shameful for us as a nation? Will our future generations forgive us?

## Dhaka Day by Day

## Time to While Away

by Cacophonix

I feel a little bad for the parents who have to wait by the school gates and waste a major part of the day, till school finishes to take their kids home. What do they do for several hours? How do they kill time?

To satisfy my curiosity one fine day, I decided to do some snooping at one of the largest unofficial guardians' gatherings near a prominent school in the city.

There were plenty of mothers in sight, sitting in groups on both sides of the road.

The bunch closest to me was talking about the 'all time favourite topic' of the female urbanites — right you've guessed it, 'domestic help.' "So, did you find a replacement?" — asked one lady. "No, not yet, but my sister is supposed to send me one from our home town" — was the reply. "You know these days you have to be careful about the people you hire. It's tough to get trustworthy people" — one of the women commented and started to relate her neighbour's awful experience with domestic staff. Since, it's not a topic I know a lot about or wanted to listen to for that matter, I decided to move forward." Right next to the ladies with domestic help problems was an elderly man trying very hard to stifle a yawn. Probably someone's grandad, the man looked bored and was casually flicking through the pages of a back issue of Reader's Digest.

I could see a group of women engrossed in some papers. Going nearer I discovered that they were carefully studying CVs of prospective brides or grooms. Snatches of their conversation came within my earshot. "You know X Shabeen has a daughter who is a doctor. She's very pretty and charming, she would make a perfect wife for Y" someone exclaimed. The eligible groom I found out, is an engineer doing his PhD in the US. He might be bright and rich but how do you know whether he is a man of character or not?" — a shrewd lady asked. "Oh, bhabhi, what are you talking

about, people don't bother with the groom's past record. He has a brilliant future ahead of him, who cares if he has a clean reputation" or not? — the first woman answered. What a despicable attitude. I had a retort ready but restrained myself and focused on another group of day-time squatters instead. The group in question seemed to be a very serious one, busy worrying about their offsprings' academic progress.

"My son is weak in math, I don't know what to do?" asked one mother. Another parent had a prompt solution: "Why not hire a tutor, don't waste time." Two mothers were comparing report cards. One of them it seemed was very sad about the poor grades her son received in Bengali and drawing. The other lady quickly pointed out that the little boy did well in Math at least. I was quite bored and about to leave when a young lady gave me a leaflet saying, "you simply must come." Where? I wondered and looked at the piece of paper. Oh, it's another Eid dress sale, which promises to be different than the others. Sorry, I can't go, I silently muttered. There are far too many sales these days to keep track of them.

On the pavement on the other side of the road, two youngmen were busy talking about clothes. So it's only women who talk about clothes?

One man was saying, "I recommend you go to Seal or Cat's Eye, you're likely to get trendy shirts there." "Really said the other one and they started talking about footwear available at Bata," but I didn't wait to hear what they were saying. Some women were exchanging recipes. One was diligently writing down how to make doughnuts, for iftar (?) guess jalap is getting a bit boring.

Enough, I couldn't stay there another minute longer. While I was leaving I saw a woman giving me a curious look. I realised that they took me for just another guardian and there I was leaving before school was over!



## The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

Monday 3rd February

All programmes are in local time. There may be changes in the programmes.

BTV

3:00 Opening announcement Al-Quran Programme summary 3:10 News in Bangla 3:15 Patriotic song 3:20 Recitation from the Bible 3:25 Cartoon Film: The Lone Ranger 3:50 Releascast of selected programmes 4:45 Educational programme 5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 Dolan Champa 5:50 Sports programme 6:30 Anu Paramanu 6:50 Open University 7:00 The News 7:25 Band show 8:00 News in Bangla 8:45 Package Drama 10:00 News in English 10:30 Jamamat 10:50 Comedy series: Seinfeld 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Tuesday's programme 11:40 Close down

Planet Ruby 4:30 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 5:30 Big Bang 6:00 Rewind VJ Sophie 7:00 By Demand VJ Trey 8:00 Planet Ruby 9:00 BPL Oye! 10:00 First Day First Show 10:30 Launchpad VJ Samira 11:00 The Ride 1:30 Over The Edge 12:30 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 1:00 Hayas 2:00 Frame by Frame 3:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 4:30 Asian top 20 VJ Trey

And Cooks 10:30 Videofashion 11:00 Kate & Allie 11:30 The Oprah Winfrey Show 12:30noon Dynasty 1:30 Santa Barbara 2:30 The Bold & The Beautiful 3:00 Reporter 3:30 Buniyad 4:00 Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro 4:30 Land of the Giants 5:30 Black Beauty 6:00 Kate & Allie 6:30 Ann Willan's Look And Cooks 7:00 Living on the Edge 7:30 Star News (Hindi) 8:00 Small Wonder 8:30 Hindi Serial: Tu Tu Main Main 9:00 Imitian 9:30 Star News 10:00 British Comedy: Yes Minister 10:30 House Of Cards 11:30 The Bold & The Beautiful 12:00 Santa Barbara 1:00 Star News 01:30 The X Files 2:30 Star Trek 3:00 Quincy 4:00 Oprah Winfrey Show 5:00

Cinema: Mediterraneo 18 (English Subtitles) 2:00 After Dark: The Rapture 18 (Arabic Subtitles) 4:00 Film Club: Fatal Sky 18 (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Horror: Invitation To Hell 15 (Arabic Subtitles)

6:00 ZED 6:30 Disney Hour 7:30 Raahat 8:00 Gaane Aajane 8:30 TVS Sa Re Ga Ma/Jhalak 9:30 Campus 10:00 Parivartan 10:30 News 11:00 Horror: Invitation To Hell 15 (Arabic Subtitles)

ZEE TV

12:30 Yeh Kahan A Gaye Hum 1:00 No Problem 1:30 Raahat 2:00 Shapath 2:30 TMM 4:00 Dastaan 4:30 Ghoonta Aaina 5:00 Jagran 5:30 Surtal 6:00 News 6:30 Jagran 7:00 ZED 8:30 Disney Hour 9:30 Gaane Aajane 10:00 Nirma Hum Paanch 10:30 Dream Merchants 11:00 Daak Ghar Apna Ghar 12:00 Helpline 12:30 Dhara Zaike Ka Safer 1:00 ZED 1:30 Asian Sky Shop 2:00 Hum Paanch 2:30 Tara 3:00 Raahat 3:30 Mere Ghar Ana Zindagi 4:00 Pakkeed 4:30 Roushi 3:45 Paimaney 4:00 Gharida 4:35 Biology for 10th/ Geography/ Chemistry 5:55 In

ter College Quiz 6:25 Alou Courses 7:00 Tarunam (Drama Serial) 7:45 English News 8:00 Potluck 8:20 Ali Baba 8:45 Tum Se Kahan Tha (Serial) 9:00 Break For Headline News 10:00 Khabrana & Commercial News 11:15 Classics Drama Serial: Janglee 12:00 Special: TBA 1:00 Khas Khabrani/ Close down

PTV

8:00am Tiliyat Aur Tarjuman/Ham/Naat 8:20 Cartoon 8:30 Khabri 8:45 Abb Pata Challa 9:05 Khat Farmash 9:20 Sargam Sargam 9:45 Ilaaj-Bil-Ghiza Pakistan 10:05 Shab Daigh 10:35 English Film: Goof Troop 10:55 Milli Naghma 11:00 Khabri 11:15 Tere Naam 12:30 Monarama Cabin 12:30 Monarama Cabin 13:00 Nazrulgeeti 11:15 Folk Songs 13:30 Monarama Cabin 13:30 Tarannum (Drama Serial) 14:00 Amar Prem 12:00 Monarjan 12:30 Song Yatra 1:00 Cover Story-Hostel (Serial) 1:00 Jane Kaha Meri Jigar Gaya Ji 1:30 The Young And The Restless (Eng. Serial) 2:30 Cine Matinee-Hindi Feature Film 5:30 The Three Stooges 6:00 Shama (Drama Serial) 12:55pm Quran-e-Hakeem 1:02 Bismillah 1:15 Angara (Drama Serial) 2:00 Shehrad (Drama Serial) 2:50 The Face Of Cultural 3:15 Roushi 3:45 Paimaney 4:00 Desh Bidesher Kela 6:30 Batayan (Drama Serial) 6:55 Bangan (Serial) 7:30 Bangla Sambad 7:55 Dinandin 8:00 Gan Sudhu Gan

9:00 Janmabhumi 9:30 Monogram Cabin 10:00 Bengali Movie Club Film Show 1:00 Closed

SONY ET

8:30am Yaadon Ki Baarat 9:00 The Three Stooges 9:30 Dennis The Menace 10:00 Tere Naam 11:00 Faasle (Serial) 11:30 Civil Lines (Serial) 12:00 Jagdhar 12:30 Cover Story-Hostel (Serial) 1:00 Jane Kaha Meri Jigar Gaya Ji 1:30 The Young And The Restless (Eng. Serial) 2:30 Cine Matinee-Hindi Feature Film 5:30 The Three Stooges 6:00 Trisha 2:30 Aiy Chander Ki Anandey 3:00 Bahari (Serial) 3:30 Bangan 5:05 Nepal Programme 5:30 News 5:35 Dennis The Menace 6:30 Shabda 7:00 Yaadon Ki Baarat 7:00 Premier 7:30 I Dream of Jeannie 8:00 Surf-Wheel Of Fortune 8:30 5 Star Xpressit 9:00 Jevan Mirtu (Serial) 9:30 Yeh Sadi Nabi Ho Saki (Serial) 10:00 Chamatkari (Drama Serial) 10:30 Ghaav

11:00 The