DUCATION in schools and

colleges has turned out to

# State of Education: The Erosion Must be Checked

by Md. Asadullah Khan

In a bid to stem the outward tide of the best and the brightest by providing educational opportunities at home, the government objective of encouraging the growth of private universities in the country is a laudable move.

ventures.

be wasteful exercises leaving the young learners handicapped and ill-suited to face the gruelling test of life, either in the job market or more ranks as one of the "Asian specifically in academic Tigers", government has taken steps to rein in parents it feels institutions as teachers. That underscores the fact that are spending too much on improving their offsprings' parents are overly concerned with getting the best possible prospects. They are banning education for their children. private tutors in subjects other than arts and music for all stu-Statistics taken from either in the city or even other urban dents below university level areas reveal that parents are The objective is that government wants to curb excessive spending too much on improving their offsprings spending on tutors as a meaprospects. The result however is sure to promote egalitarianism dismal. Few of those who manamong students by disallowing age to get the certificates and parents a chance to 'buy' their degrees land good jobs. A children a superior education. household typically spends Opinion poll reveals that about Tk 3000/= a month on many people in the country are opposed to private tutoring, estutoring for a single secondary school student, and at least half pecially at the primary stage. Bad tutoring or faulty lessons the amount on a child at the primary school. Many families dished out at this stage saps are said to spend almost half of the mental vigour, intelligence, their income on private teachers merit and awareness of a child and eke out a miserable living about his surroundings. It is either by taking loan, or adjustonly through dissemination of

sound education at this stage

that a society can attain the

skills and discipline needed for

an economic battle that awaits

its people at the later stage of

their life. Left in the hands of

apathetic tutor who hardly

make any effort to understand a

child's mores, psychology, im-

pulsiveness and inquisitiveness,

a child's schooling or grooming

So says an enraged wealthy

parent, "I'm in no mood to have

my children educated in the

country where syllabus and

curriculum are changed so fre-

quently and schools fail to fulfil

their duties." That's about an

affluent parent but what fate

paying Taka 800 to 1,000 for is likely to end up in a disaseach subject, these centres net trous consequence and that a big sum of money but the only underscores that spending quality of their products is anyon tutors that amounts to thing but happy. costly sacrifices by the parents Yet, there is hardly any secoften turn out to be wasteful ond thought about the fact that expenditures. But without any people in the country, despite respite, parents would continue distress signals coming from to do so as long as schools. either banks and industries or both public and private, are not political fronts want their childoing their job properly. And it dren to be educated. But is at this juncture that governshould it come so much at the ment action as regards sound cost of their economic downturn planning and creating a sound or should such endeavours put base is needed.

them only in dire straits? Reports gleaned from some prosperous countries in the Asian region definitely would inspire the parents in the country and call for government action to herald a change. In South Korea, a country that

ing the shortfall through some

other means. But hardly this

spending is being paid off. On

the other hand, coaching cen-

tres are doing lucrative busi-

ness. Some of the centres force

its students to buy a particular

set of books, and notes - all

written either by the teachers or

head of the institute who run

the show. With each student

awaits a parent who does not have adequate means to send his son or daughter to such good school as may take care of his ward in exchange of money he should invest?

That pinpoints the responsibility of the government that must provide in public education what parents are now obliged to buy privately. This has far reaching consequences that the administration may not be able to realise immediately. The PSC report made public in the recent past reveals that the performances of our young boys in the public service examinations have dipped low. On the other hand sensible citizenry are dismayed by the loss of bright young boys to education overseas. At least hundreds and thousands of young learners in the secondary, higher secondary stages are migrating to the US, India and some European countries for their schooling and in search of a life that is apparently 'absent' in the country. Few countries can take satisfaction from such departure of their best and the brightest. In the process we lose not only the resources of those who leave but also the confidence and commitment of those who remain. Precisely true, with the children staying abroad either for schooling or in job, the commitment and patriotism of the (wealthy) parents staying in are bound to be tainted and mixed. So said an affluent businessman who owns several industries including frozen food and garments in the country while his wife and children are staying in the US, "I am exporting money from Bangladesh to the US". That's a loss poignantly dramatised in an image common to some their world countries, but Bangladesh perhaps featuring

most prominently. The government must respond to this sorry state of affairs in the education sector with pragmatism and farsight-

ties have been established in the country, all of them in the Dhaka city, to cater education in the western style and quality with teachers hired from abroad. But the administration must see, as President Justice Shahabuddin has stressed, that all these universities must have sufficient funds to prevent premature collapse. In a bid to stem the outward tide of the best and the brightest by providing educational opportunities at home, the government objective of encouraging the growth of private universities in the country is a laudable move. But unfortunately all these so far have been only Dhaka city based. However, the country's educational authorities must now work on improving the quality of education in schools. colleges and universities that have sprung up as commercial

The country now sees a

proliferation of tuition centers

edness. Some private universi-

in the lanes and by lanes of cities and towns. Media centres, a new addition in this trade are also making brisk business earning commission from both the tutors and the concerned parents asking for tutors for their wards. To cash in on what has become a lucrative business, a large number of these tuition/coaching centres are allegedly recruiting teachers without minimum qualification. experience and commitment. These coaching centres are not recognised by the government. are privately run and do without the most basic of facilities. Little wonder then that these 'educational institutions' are producing sub-standard and incompetent people. To put them at different important organisations is a national risk. And the risk is spreading. Even recognised schools and colleges strapped for cash, and their teachers supposedly bereft of

are engaged in a messy business. Since quality of education has fallen, corruption in teaching and examination affairs seems to be going rampant. Take for instance the messy deal alleged to have been arranged by a teacher of English at the Karatia Sadat College. The teacher is reported to have entered into a contract of Tk. 7000/- for re-writing each HSC English script made over to him as an examiner of the Dhaka Board. Fully aware of the fact that students these days are deficient in English, mostly due to bad teaching either at the coaching centre or schools, he wanted to cash in on a situation that did not work well ultimately. Reportedly, the said teacher did not have a clean past and was involved in a similar scandal just a year before which the principal of the college was fully aware of. People wonder if a principal fully aware of a teacher's tainted past could

In another case, reported by the media in the recent past, if was revealed that a teacher of botany at a certain college in Sreepur, Dhaka, through fake identity got the answer scripts of HSC English paper for examination from the Dhaka Board.

recommend him for a job!

All these are corruptions par excellence. This underscores the fact that teaching of English in schools and colleges leave much to be desired. The government must try for effective

N the last two years, it has

become widely recognised

Lthat there is a problem of

arsenic in tubewell water in

many parts of Bangladesh and

adjoining areas of West Bengal

in India. The problem was

identified in India where

Professor Deepankar

Chakraborty played a key role

in drawing attention to the is-

health and water sectors such

as NIPSOM, DPHE, BWDB and

others began sampling well-wa-

ter and looking for medical

symptoms as evidence of ar-

clear that there was a signifi-

cant problem in Bangladesh.

sized that there is considerable

uncertainty in extrapolating

the results of individual water

analyses or medical diagnoses

to make estimates of the total

number of people affected. The

distribution of arsenic is com-

plicated by two scales of vari-

ability. On the one hand, there

is a local variation from one

well to another, while at an-

other scale there is a systematic

In different countries, ar-

Apart from the hills in the

However, it must be empha-

senic contamination. It became

Various agencies in the

cure to meet the unfulfilled demand in the country for accurate instruction in the world's top business and international

language.

People expect that, report carried by the media last June about the objective of the government in taking up a project for "improvement of English language teaching" at a cost of Tk. 25 crore, will not remain only a pious wish of the government. That with the launching of the new education policy that proposes to create three tiers of schooling from the primary to higher stages, the need for "teacher training centres" in the subjects of Mathematics. Physics and Chemistry in the secondary and higher secondary stages can hardly be ignored. For while incorporating new curriculum at different stages and leaving the teachers ill-equipped to handle the task, the result would be a monumental failure. It should be stressed further that unless teacher training is conducted on a national scale under the new education policy, the aim of good quality education will remain an elusive dream. Something like a racket has been going on in the field of education that must be arrested in no time to put the educational base of nation on a sound anvil. The nation can't afford any further wastage or erosion of its talented and vibrant human resources that with infusion of fund and proper nurturing can turn out to be a gigantic force for the development of the country.

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and can be classified according

to which of the river systems

(Ganges, Brahmaputra, Tista,

Meghna etc.) deposited them.

The terrace areas are better

known as the Madhupur and

Barind Tracts, and the sedi-

ments that underlie them are

much older than the adjacent

floodplain. Most of the arsenic

occurs in the younger sediments

Although arsenic occurs in

derived from the Ganges basin.

alluvial sediments, the ulti-

mate origin of the arsenic must

be in the outcrops of hard rocks

higher up the Ganges catchment

that were eroded in the recent

geological past and then re-de-

posited in West Bengal and

Bangladesh by ancient courses

of the Ganges. At present, these

source rocks have not been

derstand that arsenic does not

occur at all depths in the allu-

vial sediments. Although there

is not enough evidence to draw

firm conclusions, it appears

that high concentrations are

restricted to the upper 150 me-

and offers prospects of obtain-

deeper layers.

ing arsenic free waters from

safe water supplies: a) treat-

ment of well water before con-

sumption, b) sinking wells in

arsenic free aquifers, and c) de-

velopment of surface water

probably have a role to play, but

all have some disadvantages

which will form a research

agenda for the next few years.

The option i.e., sinking tube-

wells is the best, but may not be

possible in all areas and in the

long term may result in migra-

tion of arsenic between aquifers

while the treatment options are

likely to be costly and have

practical problems.

All of these approaches

sources with treatment.

There are three options for

ters of the alluvial sediments

It is also important to un-

ARSENIC IN GROUND WATER

Serious Health-hazard

by Peter Revenscroft

Bangladesh Has an Image Problem

r spent the month of July on holiday at my home in America. While I was there, I showed some of my friends the best of the photographs that I have taken in Bangladesh since I joined the faculty at NSU last October. Their reactions were

fascinating. I am not a professional photographer, But I am quite good with a camera, and as a cultural anthropologist I understand how to photograph people and activities in ways that convey a good "feeling" for the lives of the people that I meet in cities. towns, villages and countrysides around the world. I always destroy the photos that I dislike for technical or aesthetic reasons, but over the years I have saved something like 10,000 photographs that I think have some merit both as art and as

social science. Furthermore, in my many years as a photographer, I have regularly shown my work to my friends in America. When they hear that I am on my way home from some exotic place, they just naturally get ready to see some of my new photos. It's an annual ritual, sort of like giv-

ing gifts at Christmas. The last photographs that affected my friends the way the Bangladesh photos did were those that I took in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1990. I worked in the Kingdom for a year before the Gulf War began, and returned to America a few weeks after the war erupted. hence after my friends had become saturated with TV coverage of events in the Eastern Province of the Kingdom.

The Saudi Arabia that showed to my friends was so different from the Saudi Arabia they saw every night on TV that several of them had a hard time believing that my version of the Kingdom was real. They were accustomed to seeing nothing but endless stretches of empty sand dunes broiling eternally under a terrifying sun. Among other things. I showed them the spectacular Asir Mountains, over 3000 meters high, foggy and green, inhabited by friendly people in colourful clothes living in ancient cities and Bedouin tents, tending their camels and goats and selling gorgeous bottles of golden honey in traditional markets. My friends are intelligent people who have traveled widely. but the contrast between CNN's Saudi Arabia on the TV screen and my Saudi Arabia on the slide projection screen was as-

America's image Bangladesh is an image of disasters - cyclones, floods, famines, air pollution, hartals, malnutrition, warfare, VVIPs saying "Bangladesh is a poor country" before the UN and the World Bank, and so on. It is the same image of the country that you can see when you watch CNN International, except that CNN International provides much more coverage of Bangladesh than does the domestic version of CNN that is available in America. So if you were to combine all of the pictures of Bangladesh that you see on CNN International during an average month, then delete the least distressing two-thirds of them, you would see what

tonishing to them.

America sees about Bangladesh. So when I showed my photos from Bangladesh, my friends didn't see anything they recognized. They had never seen myriads of Bangladeshi women walking to work in brilliantly coloured saris; they knew nothing about the glorious splashes of colour at the street-side

flower markets; to them rickshaws are devices that exploit the poor so they simply could not believe the kaleidoscopic beauty of hundreds of rickshaws packed together beneath the Farmgate fly-over in the late afternoon sun. They saw emerald rice fields and wellkept village homes, women making flour in shafts of intense sunlight deep in Old Dhaka, and carefully arranged foods in vegetable markets ...

and they were shocked that they saw something besides squalor. When I showed them happy children picking flowers, boys walking to mosque, young men paddling boats along the rivers and crowds of people preparing for a wedding feast, somebody got impatient and asked me when I was going to show them

the "real" Bangladesh. But what does the "real" Bangladesh look like?

One of my friends said that I have a rare ability to find beauty even in the midst of a disaster. He argued that I should be pleased to photograph and show that beauty whenever I can, and that people who insist on emphasizing the squalor of Bangladesh are voyeuristic and

perverted. But another friend argued that a collection of beautiful photographs taken at the site of a disaster is so misleading as to be evil. From her perspective, my failure to photograph beggars, cripples, filth and squalor simply invalidates my photography in Bangladesh. She feels that CNN's disaster photography is so awful - and so true that I must follow their lead whether I want to or not, else I am guilty of putting a pretty bandage on a filthy wound.

I left America feeling that photography in Bangladesh is a lot more difficult than I would like it to be.

As I was flying back here at the beginning of August, the beauty of the countryside between Calcutta and Dhaka as viewed through the window of the Emirates Airbus was extraordinary, especially the networks of villages sitting on endless strings of interconnected islands in the vast inland monsoonal sea. And then I reached Kamal Ataturk Avenue and saw a chaotic crush of vehicles parked three abreast in ankle-deep water in front of the University, heard beggars and cripples demanding baksheesh from one and all, ran from screaming filthy buses to avoid being killed by them, and

smelled piles of decomposing ant bised at trong time and duagnicio street, And then I saw the face of my fflend who says I put pretty bandages on filthy wounds, and decided that I would do my best

to capture that street on film. But I cannot. I would be delighted to fly slowly over Bangladesh in a light plane on a bright sunny day to photograph its remarkable beauty. But simply will not go out into Kamal Ataturk Avenue with my camera and capture that hideous experience on film. It should be erased from the face of the earth instead of being

preserved for posterity. My friends who want to see the bad side of Bangladesh on film will just have to watch it on TV without any help from me. I will show them the beauty of the country and its people. and do everything in my power to make sure those are the images of Bangladesh I remember after I leave.

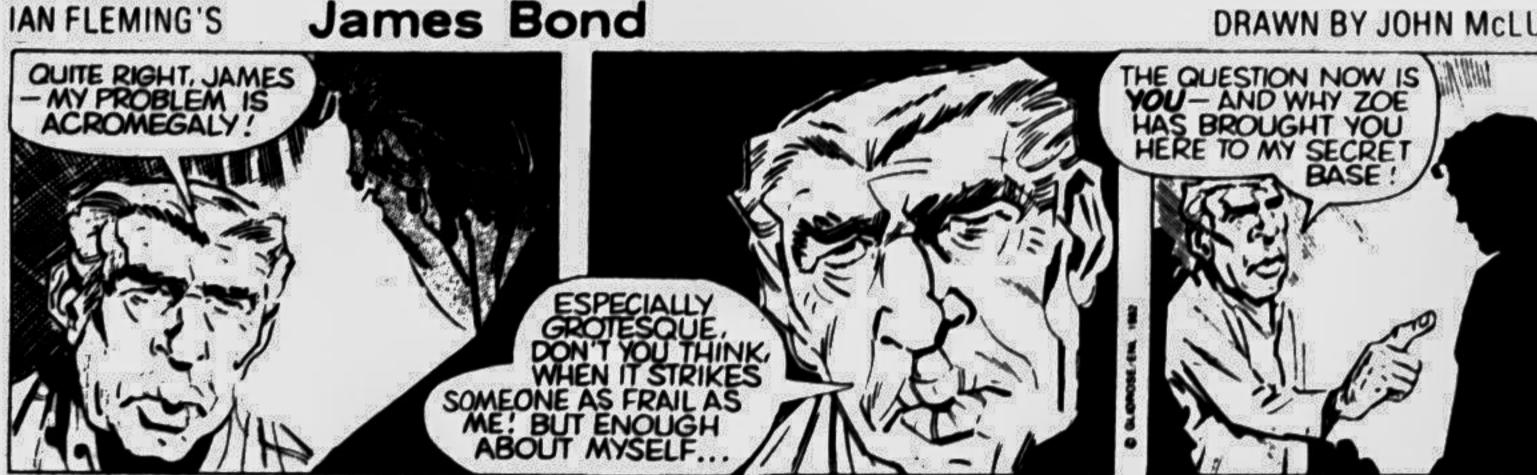
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## Garfield ®



### HOW COME I JUST SAWA MOUSE RUNNING ACROSS THIS TABLE?!





morality and ethical values and

too keen to make quick fortune.





## by Jim Davis





### race areas. The floodplain and the sediments beneath them are only a few thousand years old Metropolitani

# RT VING ON PASSPORTS, VIS SH HIGH COMMISSION DEAK BASSY, DHAKA N HIGH COMMISSION DIES

British High Commissioner to Bangladesh David C Walker addressing the certificate-awarding ceremony of the courses on "Passports, Visas and Travel Document Abuse" Wednesday evening at Bangladesh Airlines Training Centre.

## Weather

## Fall in day temp likely

Moderately havy fall is likely at places over Barisal and Chittagong divisions in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today. Met office also forecast light to moderate rain or thunder-

shower accompanied by temporary gusty wind at most places over Chittagong, Barisal, Khulna and Sylhet divisions and at many places over Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions. Slight fall in day temperature is likely throughout the country. Meantime, Khulna experienced the highest 57 mm rain

during the last 24 hours till 6 am yesterday. Jessore had 26 mm shower, Sylhet 23 and Comilla 22 mm during the period. The contry's highest temperature 33.8 degree Celsius was Rangamati and the lowest 23.5 degrees at Sylhet. The sun sets today at 6:25 pm and rises tomorrow at 5:36 am.

#### 9th special meeting of Railway held

Bangladesh Railway authority in its 9th special meeting. held yesterday, decided to provide more power to the rail administration to help it carry on necessary commercial activities, reports BSS.

The decision was taken to make the Bangladesh Railway authority an organisation free from subsidy. With this end in view, the meeting also decided to build a time-befitting infrastructure for the railway within the next one year, an official press release said.

The meeting discussed the issue of establishing railway connection in the Jamuna bridge from the first day of its commission, the press release Communications Minister

Anwar Hossain presided over the meeting. He alerted all concerned to ensure proper steps in this regard. Among others, planning

commission member (physical infrastructure) Dr Fazlul Hasan Yousuf, Secretary of the Road and Railway Division Sayed Rezaul Hayat

#### Bangladeshi student elected president of Cambridge union

Omar Sadat, a Bangladeshi student, has been elected President of Cambridge Graduate Union, UK, says a press release.

He was also elected general

secretary of the Union last year. He has passed LLM this year from University of Cambridge. He is the youngest son of Omar Faruque, a director of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI), and Dr Hasina Banoo, Associate Professor of Cardiology, PG Hospi-

tal, Dhaka.

## Bangabandhu Shishu

HERE and THERE

Kishore Mela State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed yesterday said nobody in the world has become successful in suppress-

ing the truth, reports BSS. He said all endeavours to suppress the truth or history of a country have been proved to be meaningless. A group of reactionary forces always tried to create chaos in the country, but they have never won and the patriotic forces have always resisted their evil designs.

Prof Saveed was addressing a seminar on "Bangabandhu and Bangladesh," organised by Bangabandhu Shishu Kishore Mela, at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium.

Chaired by Justice K M Sobhan, the seminar was also addressed by Mustafa Sarwar, Dr Enamul Huq. Dr Nilima Ibrahim, Igbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Santosh Gupta, Mohammad Anisuzzaman, Shishu Mela organiser Mia Monsor and Mohiuddin Manu.

### Teachers' Training College

The installation ceremony of the newly elected executive committee of 'Extra-Curricular Activities' of Teachers' Training College, Dhaka was held at the college auditorium in the city yesterday, reports BSS.

State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Quader attended the function as chief guest. The state minister, in his address, urged the teachers to

organise sports and cultural ac-

tivities regularly in the educa-

tional institutions.

Earlier, Principal of the College Prof Rezina Sultana conducted the oath of the newlyelected 17-member executive committee for the year 1997-98, headed by Fazlur Rahman and S K Abul Basher as its president and general secretary respectively.

Extra-curricular activities

can help in maintaining con-

genial atmosphere in educa-

tional institutes, he added.

### Dhaka Little Theatre

By Staff Correspondent Dhaka Little Theatre at its annual general meeting on Monday decided to open a Little Theatre School' with an aim to

get the children and juvenile involved in the theatre movement. From January next year, Little Theatre School will conduct one-year certificate course for

youngsters aged between eight to 15 years, says a press release.

#### Deptt of Geography and Environment, DU The certificate-awarding

ceremony of the Special GIS Certificate Courses 1 and 2, conducted by the GIS laboratory of the Department of Geography and Environment, Dhaka University, was held yesterday. The meeting was presided over by Prof K Nizamuddin, Chairman of the Department. The special guest Waliul Islam, Secretary, Statistics Division, Ministry of Planning, presented certificates to the trainees.

course was conducted by Prof Amanatullah Khan of the department, says a press release.

# own arrangements.

### A total of 733 workers will use 450 fogging machines in 90 Also 600 hand-driven ma-

DCC drive to

contain mosquito

Dhaka City Corporation

(DCC) has taken up an extensive

programme to contain mos-

quito menace in the coming

The DCC has allocated Tk

six crore and 15 lakh for the

The mosquito-control pro-

gramme includes removing wa-

ter hyacinth from derelict

ponds and canals, fogging for

elimination of flying

mosquitoes, larviciding and us-

ing ultra-low-volume (ULV) in-

breeding season, reports BSS.

menace from Sept 1

wards of the city in each alternate day from September 1. chines along with 40 wheel-

mounted fog-sprayers will be used to eradicate mosquitoes. Mayor Mohammad Hanif has also directed the Health De-

partment of DCC to take measures in this regard. A total of 310 new fogger machines were procured and additional manpowers have been

gramme a success. Every day 45 wards will be ender operation to contain the mosquito menace. Ten ULV machines will be

deployed to make the pro-

procured this year. The city corporation has requested different ministries. agencies, and individuals to clear bushes and drains and remove hyacinth with their

A monitoring cell led by the chief executive of DCC has been formed to speed up and make the endeavour a success.

### Need for trained industrial managers stressed

Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed stressed the need for trained industrial managers both in public and private sectors to cope with the constant changes in technologies throughout the fast-moving programme, said a press release. world, reports UNB.

"The world is moving fast and new technologies are penetrating everyday," he said inaugurating a day-long seminar on "training and internal consultancy programme" in the city vesterday.

The minister asserted that the country needs good man agers to make the industries sector sound, financially viable and internationally competitive, based on international comparative advantages.

Organised by the British Council, the seminar was also addressed by British High Commissioner David C Walker, Acting Director of the British Council Dr Simon Kay and programme designer and conductor Prof Jack Butterworth.

The training and internal consultancy programme is for local managers and trainers who are involved in the design and implementation of working practices in the industrial

Sixty pairs of managers from Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation, Steel and Engineering Corporation, Sugar and Food Industries Corporation and private sector enterprises have been trained so far under this programme.

tional Development, the second

phase of the programme will

start soon.

The Managing Director of Financially and technically assisted by the British government's Department for Interna-

#### Certificate-awarding ceremony of courses on 'travel document abuse' held

The certificate-awarding ceremony of the courses on "passports, visas and travel document abuse" was held at Bangladesh Airlines training centre Wednesday evening, reports BSS.

Experts from Britain. Canada and the USA have provided technical assistance to immigration and airlines officials working in Bangladesh to facilitate easy passage of genuine air travellers and check abuse of international travel documents.

The experts conducted four one-day courses for immigration and airline officials from Aug 17-20. About 120 officials representing the Department of Immigration and passport of the Biman Bangladesh Airlines and 15 other international airlines operating in Bangladesh attended the courses.

The course was jointly organised by the British High Commission, the Canadian High Commission and the US Embassy in collaboration with Biman Bangladesh Airlines at the Bangladesh Airlines Training Centre (BATC)

Biman Air Commodore Rafiqui Islam, British High Commissioner David Walker, Canadian High Commission Nicholas Etheridge and US Charge d'Affaires Theodore Nist were present