

Of ICT and our education sector

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COMPUTER education in Bangladesh got momentum in the decade of nineties of the past century.

Computer hardware business people through different media and exhibitions every year are giving publicity to the citizens of the country that Bangladesh has a big potential of earning foreign exchange from export of data entry works, medical transcription works, web site design works, software government has also liberalised the import of computer and computer related equipment.

Let us see what is the achievement of the computer educated people in our country. During early 1990s some entrepreneurs purchased computers in large numbers to do data entry works by appointing local boys and girls.

earning is increasing every year. Indian computer science people could successfully operate in the international market because of mainly higher skill in English language and by learning higher programming languages.

In order to cope with the world market in ICT sector the following steps may be taken up immediately as a short term measure by the Computer Council under the supervision of the Board of Investment to augment export earning from ICT works.

1. Train 120 boys per six months for medical transcription works. Students may be admitted after taking written and verbal examination on skill of English language.

2. Forty students in two sections may be trained for six months to become system analysts. Two local trainers may be appointed for training the students. The training may continue for one year to develop 80 system analysts in one year which will be sufficient at the moment. The

students who will be admitted for the training need to have experience in software design works at least for four years and their skill in English language may also be tested while giving admission. The tuition fee may be Tk 1000/- per month.

3. To produce senior programmers students may be trained for six months for learning the following programming languages. i) Oracle-20 students; ii) Java-20 students; iii) SQL server-20 students; iv) Development 2000-20 students;

Four teachers will be necessary and they are available in Bangladesh. The training programme may continue for two years for training four batches. The students to be selected must be having two years experience in software developments and good skill in English language.

report to the honourable prime minister suggesting long term strategies to be taken in this sector. This is a service oriented sector where appropriate human resource development may help our country to earn Tk 3000-4000 crore foreign exchange per year within 5-6 years time.

In the education sector there are many reforms to be made in order that our students can compete with their counterparts in the world market. Proper education primarily depends on a peaceful environment in the educational campuses and secondly on the capacity of the teachers to impart proper education to the students.

possible when political parties patronise openly student politics and protect armed cadres amongst students? Opposing student fronts of political parties very often fight with guns and explosives in the campuses making serious law and order situations.

In order to get relief from such a situation it is proposed that the policy makers of the new education policy may adopt a policy of age limit for passing SSC, HSC, Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree examinations. It is proposed that for passing SSC 16 years age limit may be given, HSC 19 years, Bachelor's Degree 22 years and Master's Degree 25 years at the maximum.

The Board of Investment may form a committee to explore the reasons of the failures in the ICT sector in Bangladesh, in spite of providing so many facilities. The committee may visit India and examine the reasons of India's success in ICT sector. India's ICT sector is one of the largest foreign exchange earning sectors in India now. The committee to be constituted by the Board of Investment may include two members from among the computer science specialists, one from the public sector and one from the private sector and one member from the University Grants Commission and submit

It is already mentioned how badly lack of skill in English language affected the growth of ICT sector. At the moment Bangla medium education is maintained up to HSC whereas at the Degree level and Master's Degree level most of the Universities still maintain English medium in the science and technology faculties.

Only in the IBA (Institute of Business Administration) in Dhaka University the admission test is not based on HSC syllabus particularly. Quite a good number of English medium students qualify in the admission test of IBA and their average performance has been found to be better than the HSC passed students.

It is proposed that English medium education may start from HSC level as it was during the decade of sixties of the past century. Very recently I met an Italian who is a garments buyer and I asked him about learning of English in his country. He stated that boys and girls of the present generation are thoroughly taught English and can fluently write and speak in English.

Italy is one of the G-8 countries of the world. China, South Korea and Japan are hiring English teachers from USA, Australia and UK to teach English to their students. Almost all the books on science and technology available in our country are in English at the University level. So proper evaluation may be made by the new education policy makers to provide education at higher levels in English.

There are now more than 1000 English medium schools in the country which are managed by the private entrepreneurs. Day by day the popularity of English medium schools are increasing. They provide education to the students mainly through 'O' level and 'A' level syllabuses which are prepared by the GCE organisation in UK. The British Council in Dhaka supplies the syllabuses set by GCE and coordinates the examinations for Bangladesh students.

Quite a good number of students now pass 'A' level examinations which is considered equivalent to the HSC level. The syllabuses of the 'A' level and that of HSC are quite different. The 'A' level students find it quite difficult to pass the admission tests conducted by public sector institutions as the questions are based on the HSC syllabuses.

In mathematics alone there are at least 12 chapters in HSC syllabus which are different from 'A' level syllabus. So the 'A' level students often cannot fare well in the admission tests of the public

All English medium schools may be registered with the Department of Education of the government and they may be awarded some grants so that they may charge lesser tuition fees to the students. The secondary schools in most cases are suffering from lack of teachers proficient in English language. So our government may take up a programme of training at least 300 secondary school teachers per year for five years in English language.

Conscience of nation

FAZLUL ALAM

Call them conscience of our nation, those familiar faces and familiar names who represent us in matters of grave national concerns. It is not that we do not understand the gravity, but they tell us that certain issues should be regarded as matters of grave national concern.

I wonder how we, the general public, have become so clever as to assign these tasks of protesting and creating pressures to a handful of people, usually the same people. The fact is that this body representing us as the conscience of our nation has come into action out of necessity for the good of the society.

We know that the people forming this conscience of our nation are not 'nobodies' in our society. They are highly literate people, writers, intellectuals, cultural workers, and teachers in the highest seat of learning.

advantaged social groups to achieve their objectives smoothly, while in the process refusing to note their implications on other social groups, or to note how their actions demean the other groups. The problems they fight to redress the society from are often of superficial nature.

This is all very well, however, but the fact remains that these noble people seldom take part in activities that could be called pro-poor. They talk of unhygienic drinks and foods sold openly on the footpath without thinking of the people who are forced to buy them for satisfying thirsts or hunger in the course of their daylong or nightlong economic activities.

Nevertheless, I have faith in the conscience of the nation. I still believe that with all their intelligence, knowledge, courage, good intentions, ideals that they must have cherished at some points of their lives and dream of an equitable society, they would tell us how to prepare ourselves for a total protest against undesirable things and bring about envisaged changes. Until then, they may not pretend to have become our voice, or the conscience of our nation.

In cleansing the urban landscapes and air, they rather assist

of the fact that they are in fact supporting an undemocratic state of affairs, just like the established civil societies, many of which publicly make noise against international development efforts while living of the very development money.

I am indeed amused by the pretensions of the self appointed conscience of our nation as well as those of the civil society. They claim to be our pressure groups in the manner of similar groups in the developed world. They blissfully forget that we have miles to go before we reach the historic, social, political and economic specificity of the developed countries.

They never go deep into the reasons of the problems, they do not try to make noise about the poverty of theories about poverty. This conscience of our nation is unconscious

atly stops the moment he realizes he is doing something wrong. For example, if someone drinks a glass of water by mistake, his fast still remains valid.

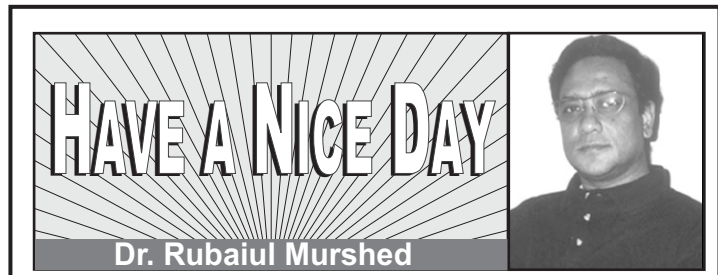
Benefits of fasting A month long dawn-to-dusk fasting is good for our physical as well as spiritual well being. The Quran tells us:

In fact we get twofold benefit from fasting -- physical benefit and spiritual benefit. Fasting does not have any adverse effect on our health; rather it takes an active part in the rejuvenating processes of the body and gives our digestive system some rest. Even little children can safely fast during the Ramadan from an early age.

Also, fasting, in which we abstain from supplying the body its biological needs, is a vehicle that takes our soul closer to Allah. According to a prophetic tradition, the Angels will distribute the rewards for all good deeds by the command of Allah, but the reward for fasting will be given by Allah Himself, the reward for fasting is the vision of Allah Himself. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) said:

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All health information to keep you up to date

Back pain

Almost everyone, at some stage in his or her life, will suffer more or less from back pain. Unfortunately, there are lots of misconceptions around this back pain.

ABC of back pain Bed rest is not the best way to cure back pain. A bad back can be so sore for the first week that nothing other than bed rest can be tolerated, but after a while, mobility is important when the really acute phase is over.

But it's not always true that X-rays, CAT scans or MRI can identify the real cause. Sometime, diagnosing back pain can be very difficult. If the problem appears to be a disc, orthopaedic surgeons recommend a discogram, as this not only gives the picture of a disrupted disc, but also the pain source.

Some very simple tips: a. Keep away from putting on weight; b. Exercise on a regular basis walking and swimming -- they are ideal; c. During lifting, always bend your knees and keep your back straight, and d. If you smoke -- quit smoking (restricts blood flow to the spine).

Did you know? Yelling too loudly too often can cause lesions on the vocal cords. Vocal cord means two thin folds of tissue within the larynx that vibrate as air passes between them, producing sounds that are the basis of speech.

The holy month of fasting

IFFAT MIRZA

RAMADAN, the 9th month of the Islamic calendar is very special for the Muslims because in this month the Holy Quran, the Final Testament, was first revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) more than fourteen hundred years ago. On this occasion, Allah asked his servants to fast the whole month to thank Him for His great favour to the mankind and to celebrate the revelation of the Quran.

Allah, the Majestic and the Exalted said in the Quran: "Ramadan is the month in which was sent down the Quran, as a guide to mankind, also clear (signs) for guidance and judgement (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if anyone is ill or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance you shall be grateful." [2:185]

Meaning of fasting Fasting (Sawm) in Islam means abstaining from eating, drinking, smoking etc. from the break of dawn until the sunset. All Muslim adults must fast. It is our Prophet's tradition to take a light meal before dawn and to break the fast with dates and water just after sunset.

Whoever does not give up lies and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his leaving his food and drink i.e. Allah will not accept his fasting." [Bukhari] It is better to restrain the tongue from useless talks or gossip while we are fasting and also we should stay away from hearing evil talks too, because our Prophet (pbuh) said, "The back-biter and the hearer of back-biting are equal co-sharers of the sin".

Exemption from fasting - Children under the age of puberty and insane persons are exempted from the duty of fast and no compensation is required for them. - Men and women who are too old or too sick can pay compensation instead of fasting. - If a person is traveling or is sick, if a woman is pregnant or is nursing a child can defer the observation of a fast. They can make up for it later. - A woman should not fast during her period of menstruation or during her confinement just after childbirth. She must postpone the fast till recovery and then make up for it, a day for a day.

Penalty of voiding a fast The fast of any day of Ramadan becomes invalid if intentionally eating, drinking etc. before sunset and the penalty of deliberately doing something that nullifies the fast is to fast sixty consecutive days. Or as an alternative, feed sixty poor persons sufficiently, besides observing the fast of one day against the very day.

No penalty for mistakes If anyone, by mistake, does something that would ordinarily break his fast, his fast is not nullified. The fast stands valid provided he immediately stops the moment he realizes he is doing something wrong.

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