

# 50pc pry children drop out

Reveals report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Almost half of the children drop out without completing primary education, revealed a report launched at Brac Centre auditorium in the city yesterday.

The report titled 'Access to education in Bangladesh: Country analytic review of primary and secondary education' is an inception phase output of the international Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE), of which Brac University-Institute of Educational Development (BU-IED) is a partner institution.

The report however assesses that without a reliable bench mark for this important indicator like drop out or completion rate, any kind of planning or setting targets for Millennium Development Goals (MDG) or Education for All (EFA) would be faulty.

"Virtual or silent exclusion from engagement in learning of those



PHOTO: STAR

Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury speaks at a launching ceremony of a report at Brac Centre auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left is Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud and on his right are Elizabeth Carriere and Rasheda K Choudhury.

who continue to be enrolled nominally is as serious a problem as open exclusion," finds the report, adding that this phenomenon remains largely un-investigated and un-qualified.

"Poverty has to be addressed to achieve educational goals," said Elizabeth Carriere, acting head of DFID, while addressing the launching ceremony of the report.

"Poverty is the most serious

barrier to achieving the educational goals," said Elizabeth, stressing the need for poverty eradication.

However, DFID would continue its co-operation in education sector of Bangladesh, she added.

"Government must ensure quality education for all," said Rasheda K Choudhury, director, Campaign for Popular Education.

Claiming that the poor are not getting quality education, Rasheda said, "Education is a public good and also a right. Education is not like a commodity."

Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud in his speech said, "Number of enrolled students in primary level is increasing in Bangladesh, compared to other neighbouring countries." Dr Wahiduddin at the same time questioned the quality of education in the country.

Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury, vice chancellor of Brac University, chaired the programme.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina speaks at a seminar at the Engineers' Institute auditorium in the city yesterday on the occasion of historic March 7. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Rahman Memorial Trust organised the seminar.

## 'Fishery resources dwindle everyday'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a conference yesterday stressed the need for proper maintenance of the water bodies to boost fishery resources in the country.

In a keynote paper at the conference, Director General of WorldFish Centre Dr Stephen J Hall underlined the need for external assistance to fishermen community to ensure sustainable development of fishery resources around the world.

Bangladesh and South Asia Office of the WorldFish Centre and the Department of Fisheries have jointly organised the programme with the assistance of the Department for International Development (DFID) UK.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Adviser to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock Dr CS Karim said country's fisheries resources are dwindling every day due to unscrupulous management of water bodies.

He said due to inadequate and poor maintenance, some of the country's richest fishery regions like Chalan Beel and low-lying areas of Sunamganj and Kishoreganj, have been losing productivity over the years.



PHOTO: STAR

Newly elected leaders of Dhaka Bar Association present a bouquet to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at Hawa Bhaban in the city yesterday.

## SYLHET COUNCIL TEAM MEETS ADVISER Expats keen to invest \$3b

UNB, Dhaka

A delegation of Greater Sylhet Council representing Bangladeshi expatriates in the UK yesterday said they are keen to invest around US \$ 3 billion in education, health and civil aviation sectors in the country.

This was conveyed by the 8-member delegation during a meeting with Foreign Affairs Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury at his office.

The delegation led by the Council President Mohammad Manchab Ali said the Royal Bengal Airlines is going to be commissioned in Bangladesh soon at the initiative of the Bangladeshi expatriates.

They demanded of the government to set up an EPZ in Sylhet with necessary facilities for investment by the expatriates.

Chief Executive Officer of Immigration Advisory Services (IAS) and former British MP Keith Best said his organisation works closely with the British High Commission to ensure that the applicants get the best possible advice for migration to the UK.

IAS started working in Sylhet seven years back, he added.

Process of issuing visa made simple  
Says British Dy HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

British Deputy High Commissioner to Bangladesh Stephen Bridges has said the process of issuing visa for his country has been made simple and transparent.

"We are not to reduce the number of visitors, rather we need more visitors and students. But things are to be transparent and there should be no forged documents," he added.

The envoy was inaugurating a seminar on UK visas organised by the British High Commission at Saifur Rahman auditorium in Sylhet yesterday.

The seminar was also addressed by Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran, Divisional Commissioner Aziz Hasan, Deputy Director of Visa services Jonathan Verney, Chief Executive Officer of the Immigration Advisory Services (IAS) Keith Best, Second Secretary (Political) Derek Jones and Press and Public Affairs Officer Syeda Naznin Ferdousi.

Around 400 lawyers, journalists, officials, bankers, students, teachers attended the seminar.

The envoy said the British High Commission always welcomes genuine applicants.

"For seeking visas, there are some simple guidelines that help us in taking our decisions. We take decisions quickly and issue visas to people whose applications meet the requirements of the immigration rules," he added.

One of the speakers said 29,500 visas were issued against a total of 44,000 applicants from Bangladesh last year.

But more than 50 per cent of students were refused visas for valid reasons, he added.

The speaker said nearly half of the country's total applications for UK visa are made from Sylhet region and most of the applicants want to visit family members in the UK or to go there after marriages with British citizens or to settle there as dependents of some others who are already residing there.

Thus the total number of visa applicants a year rises up to 20,000, he added.

The immigration officials said applications containing forged documents are instantly refused and unfortunately one in four applicants submitted forged documents in 2006.

"Our visa processing firm VFS will be able to accept on line applications for visa shortly," said a high commission official.

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Sanjay reelected IC president



Sanjay Sardana has been reelected president of the International Recreation Club (IC) unopposed, says a press release.

The election was held at the club's 19th annual general meeting in the city recently.

Other members of the executive committee of the club are Carla Pamaril, Manish Pandey, Richard Plamondon, Hansine Benoit, Kheireen Din, Renu Paranyi, Shahid Doha and Samuel Bretzfeld.

Body recommends 40MW power plant at CEPZ

UNB, Dhaka

The Economic Affairs Committee at a meeting yesterday sent back for revision of the proposal to set up a 10MW power plant at Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ).

Finance Adviser Dr Mirza Azizul Islam presided over the meeting.

"We've sent back the proposal as we think that the 10MW power plant won't be enough for electricity

supply in CEPZ," Mirza Azizul Islam told the journalists.

He said the committee recommended upgrading the power plant to minimum 40MW to meet the growing demand for electricity in the CEPZ area.

"We ask the ministry concerned to make a new proposal for setting up a 40MW power plant and place it again before the Economic Affairs Committee after proper scrutiny," he

## 'Girls still subjected to violence, discrimination'

Violence against women and girls is one of the most extreme forms of inequality, Unicef Executive Director Ann M Veneman said yesterday on the occasion of the 51st Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

"Despite progress, we continue to live in a world where millions of girls remain out of school, engaged in exploitative labour, are trafficked, are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and are targets of sexual violence," Veneman said ahead of the International Women's Day on March 8.

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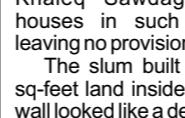
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Many also blamed the slum itself, which was built in the densely populated area of Boubazar in an unplanned way, for the huge extent of damage and casualty.

As many as 300 slums are located in South Bakalia, said Phul Mia, former president of South Bakalia Byabashayee Samity. The closely

grown shanties have narrowed the roads, making vehicular movement through the area quite impossible, he added.

One can reach the area only by rickshaw and the roads do not even

allow two rickshaws to go side by

side, said locals.

The fire fighters also faced difficulties in controlling the fire yesterday as the fire-fighting vehicles had to be kept over 1,200 feet away from the scene.

Local people, meanwhile, alleged that the casualty at Boubazar could have been reduced had the fire brigade team from nearby stations reached the spot quickly and acted sensibly during the rescue operation.

The locals told The Daily Star that the fire fighting units reached the scene about half-an-hour after the fire broke out, which they believe was a major reason behind the higher number of casualties.

"The fire broke out around 1:45am and I tried to contact the fire brigade control room but failed as my cell phone battery suddenly died. Then I took help of one of my friend's and called the Fire Brigade office," said Mohammad Aziz, a Boubazar resident.

Hearing the news, bereaved relatives of the victims rushed to the place. The air was heavy with their wails and cries.

"I was saved but I lost my parents, my brother and sister. My family has vanished into ashes in a few seconds," Kohinoor burst into tears.

The victims' relatives and locals blamed Mobarak, saying he rather became busy with saving his rags instead of alerting the neighbours.

They also blamed slum owner Khaled Sawdagor for building houses in such close proximity leaving no provision for escape.

The slum built on around 1,500 sq-feet land inside a brick boundary wall looked like a death trap.

Victims and locals recalled that a fire burnt down nine adjoining godowns and five houses owned by Zafar Sawdagor and Nuruddin recently, without any casualty though. Sufficient space between the godowns and houses saved the people living there, they said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Khaleq defended himself saying he could not make sufficient exit and entry points as the owners of the adjoining houses did not allow him to use their land to facilitate the movement of their tenants.

Many also blamed the slum itself, which was built in the densely populated area of Boubazar in an unplanned way, for the huge extent of damage and casualty.

Additional District Magistrate Tajul Islam, Deputy Police Commissioner (North) Mostafa Kamal and Fire Brigade Director (Operation) Major Sheikh Shahjalal head the three-member committee.

The committees are to submit within three days their reports on the reason of the fire, if the slum was constructed with proper approval, and allegation of negligence in rescue operation.

Meanwhile, LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal visited the place yes-

Tk 3.10 lakh looted, 4 shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Miscreants sprayed bullets on four persons leaving them injured critically and snatched away over Tk 3 lakh in two separate incidents in the city yesterday.

A group of miscreants riding on two motorbikes followed Mohammad Saiful, an electronics trader of Eastern Plaza, who was returning to Paribagh from Dhanmondi also on a motorbike after drawing Tk 3.10 lakh from a bank at 7:15pm.

Sensing presence of the miscreants Saiful tried to escape the scene leaving his motorbike at the spot but the criminals opened fire on him and snatched the money from his possession.

Saiful and a security guard Abdul Malek, 45, was injured during the firing.

In another incident, two construction workers identified as Mohamad Shakil, 20, and Rakib Uddin, 45, sustained bullet injuries when local extortionists opened fire on them at East Rampura area at 3:00pm.

The extortionists attacked the labourers when the owner of the under-construction building refused to pay them money.

All the injured were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

## Necessity of village court emphasised

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday emphasised the necessity of village court in ensuring justice, good governance and democracy, says a press release.

Democracywatch organised the discussion on 'The importance of village court to ensure justice at the grassroots' at its office in the city.

The speakers said performances of village court and village police are very poor. Union Parish