

Indigenous primary education

SHOURAV SIKDER

BANGLADESH possesses a total population of 2.5 million indigenous people, classified in not less than 45 distinct indigenous communities, most of them having their own culture and language.

The indigenous communities of Bangladesh live in vulnerable situations and they are deprived of fundamental human rights. Article 28 of the UNCRC recognises children's right to education that is free and compulsory, and Article 30 "protects Adivasi children's cultural and language rights further."

Primary education is the most significant part of all institutional education. Our education system focuses chiefly on primary education, that is up to class five. All of these are run by the active initiation and patronisation by the government, non-government and other organisations of our country.

Unfortunately there is neither any attention nor a different arrangement or any kind of special allotment from our government to the ethnic communities for the education of their children. Moreover, last annual budget (2006-2007) did not allocate money for this field.

The special affairs division of the prime minister allotted small amount of money for the development of ethnic culture and education, but there are no concrete information and statistics preserved on it. If we look at the national education policy in 2000, there was nothing specific about the indigenous people



We need to do more to help indigenous children stay in school.

and targeting non-discriminatory curriculum in the education system.

On the other hand, National Education Commission (in 2003) suggested the initiative to set up 100 schools in the remote and ethnic residing areas in next ten years. This is the present situation of education where some of the NGOs and organisations are responsible for the development of ethnic community.

National plan of action (NPA-II) clarified the education system for poor, indigenous, and disabled children. NPA-II also proposed to use modern equipment for the indigenous children. Out of four major areas of NPA, one is early childhood education. The Dakar framework for action emphasises the development and extension of early childhood education within the marginalised and vulnerable children's communities.

This issue is also supported in the PRSP. PRSP mentioned seven points as a mid-term strategy for Bangladesh on poverty reduction. One of those important

issues is quality education. PRSP emphasised participation of the indigenous children, recommended preserving the languages of indigenous people, incorporating their culture into the national curriculum, and education in mother tongue.

The foreign donors, education specialists, NGOs, and also the government have identified the important issue as easy access to school and quality education for indigenous children. The second primary education development plan (PEDP-II) included an overall situational analysis of primary education and sets some strategies and action plan for children of ethnic community.

This analysis focused on four main areas: lack of access, poor quality, cultural inappropriateness, and lack of the local control and involvement. It is obvious that the key factor in these problems is language.

The Board of National Education program follows a common textbook for primary education and all of these textbooks are written in Bangla.

These textbooks are appropriate for Bengali children but not for ethnic children. Thus large number of indigenous children drop out from school because of their lack of command over Bangla and English.

Bangla, the major medium of instruction in the primary education curriculum, is little known to the ethnic children, thus it acts as a serious impediment for education for the ethnic people. A statistic published in Daily Ittefaq on October 22, 2005 shows that, the drop-out rate of ethnic children is about 70%. And lack of proper education in primary school causes terribly bad results at high school level.

In Bangladesh, one quarter of total ethnic population are children. The approximate number of four to ten year old children who are going to school or ready to start school is half a million.

The birth rate in Bengali community is much less than the ethnic community. Due to lack of proper education, the birth rate in the ethnic community is rising. The result is the economic and social crisis in the indigenous communities.

Education is a fundamental right of every citizen. The government of Bangladesh is responsible to ensure education by creating scope and opportunities for the every citizen. Since two decades under the National Policy of Education, Bangladesh government has taken a number of initiatives to raise the literacy level. But the government did not take a single mentionable

initiative to ensure education for the children of ethnic community.

All initiatives which have been taken so far are by NGOs and other donor agencies in and outside of Bangladesh. Against this opinion, reference is clear as we look back to the peace accord of hill tracts that incorporated the provision for primary education irrespective of mother tongues of the ethnic people.

Near about 10 years have passed since signing but still no sign of initiative to execute the rule (Rule 33-Kha/2) underlined: "Education through mother language." Only education can enrich the lives of the indigenous people. But no initiative has yet been taken by the government. UN has mentioned clearly that language is the principle tool of education and that instruction should be in mother language.

The birth rate in Bengali community is much less than the ethnic community. Due to lack of proper education, the birth rate in the ethnic community is rising. The result is the economic and social crisis in the indigenous communities.

Education is a fundamental right of every citizen. The government of Bangladesh is responsible to ensure education by creating scope and opportunities for the every citizen. Since two decades under the National Policy of Education, Bangladesh government has taken a number of initiatives to raise the literacy level. But the government did not take a single mentionable

as 40% due to language barrier. In 1994, with the financial aid of BRAC a research investigation was done on the "the possibilities of bilingual education for ethnic communities." This investigation revealed that language is the primary reason the ethnic children drop out from school.

This research initiative also highlights some other obstacles such as poverty, attitude of the teachers and other (Bengali) students, textbook, and the need to work.

One report on a comparative rate of drop-out children between Bengali and ethnic communities shows that, each year the rate of drop-out from Bangali community is 30% whereas the drop-out rate from ethnic community in the hill tracts is 70%.

In Rangamati 73% children get admission in school but 55% of students leave school before completing their primary education.

In some remote areas like Thanchi in Bandarban there is no school. The report was also focused on obstacles like difficult geographical conditions, not having mother tongue as a medium of education, and poverty, which are the main cause of non-developed education system in that region.

In 1991, data from census shows 14.1% rate of education in ethnic community. This data gives us a clear conception that the number of female students is much less than the male students. A ethno-linguistic study executed by Fazle Rabbi, Unesco

physical growth education through mother tongue is the most important factor for their development.

The goal of education for all will not be achieved with the priority policy for indigenous children's primary education through government initiatives. And we need a bridge between the education and mother tongue especially for our deprived indigenous communities of Bangladesh.

Recommendations

- More schools in every village of indigenous community.
- Medium of primary education should be in mother tongue.
- Textbooks should be written in ethnic language.
- Recruitment of teachers must be from within the community.
- Ensuring supervision and monitoring with the support of the communities.
- Ensure cent percent attendants in school. If necessary, health and financial assistance (stipends) can be served.
- School calendar should be adjusted according to the local traditions, religion, work and weather.
- Need for special allocations from national budget.
- Government of Bangladesh should take responsibility for child education of indigenous community.

Shourav Sikder is a writer, researcher and teacher, Dept. of Linguistics, University of Dhaka.

Implications of US-India nuclear deal

SANDEEP PANDEY

THE US is having a difficult time trying to justify the US-India nuclear deal as part of which the 123 agreement has just been concluded, guaranteeing India full civil nuclear cooperation. As the text of the agreement has been released 3 days prior to Hiroshima Day (August 6), there is consternation among people believing in a world free of nuclear weapons.

After imposing sanctions on India, after its nuclear tests in 1974 and 1998, the US is ultimately according it the status of a nuclear weapons state under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty without formally saying so.

The US is willing to do business with India in nuclear technology and materials, as it is with any other nuclear weapons or non-nuclear weapons state, which is a party to the NPT. As a non-signatory state, India is not supposed to derive this privilege.

However, under the deal, India is being given the benefits which have been made available to some very close allies of the US, like Japan or EURATOM, making other NPT members wonder about the utility of their acceding to the Treaty.

The US seems to be more worried about the business interests of its corporations than about the more worthy cause of disarmament, and it has once again proved that to maintain its global hegemony it does not mind throwing all national and international norms and laws to the wind.

With Nicholas Burns, the chief diplomat-architect of the 123 agreement, hinting at subsequent non-nuclear military cooperation with what he describes as a "soon to be the largest country in the world," we are going to see more of a unipolar world, posing a threat to the smaller countries around the world, especially the unfortunate ones out of favour with the US Government.

It is quite clear that US wants to court India as a strategic ally, with the objective of developing joint military capabilities and perhaps even establishing military bases on Indian territory, and it is willing to play

along with Indian nuclear ambitions.

The recent stop-over of the US nuclear powered aircraft carrier Nimitz, recently deployed in the Persian Gulf as a warning to Iran and possibly carrying nuclear weapons, at the port of Chennai, in violation of India's stated policy of not allowing transit of foreign nuclear weapons through its territorial waters, is a sign of things to come.

At the preparatory committee meeting for the 2010 NPT review conference held in May-June, in Vienna, the New Agenda Coalition countries, Ireland, Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden and Japan have urged India, besides Pakistan and Israel, to accede to the NPT as non-nuclear weapons states in order to accomplish universality of the Treaty.

Under the Treaty a nuclear weapons state has been defined as one, which has manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive devices prior to January 1, 1967.

It would really be a misnomer to call India -- and Pakistan and Israel -- as non-nuclear weapons states. So, the US is doing the next best thing. It says that by signing the deal with India it is bringing India into the non-proliferation regime, as more of its nuclear facilities will now be subjected to IAEA safeguards.

As part of the negotiations, India has agreed to bifurcate its nuclear activity into clearly identified civilian and military categories, with the provision of the former being open to IAEA inspections.

The US has agreed upon this India specific deal as an exception, in spite of resistance from within and without, because it thinks that India has not contributed to proliferation.

It is a different matter, though, that by conducting nuclear explosions twice India has violated the global non-proliferation regime, instigating Pakistan to do the same. North Korea was also emboldened to come out of NPT because of India's brazen transgression.

India has consistently refused to sign the NPT, CTBT or FMCT. It is amazing how India also yields to the US-like concessions to India.

The US is going to campaign with the NSG to engage in



US and India, the nuclear allies.

nuclear trade with India after it has helped India sign an agreement with IAEA on safeguards, because it has to seek another approval of the Congress before the deal can be considered final.

It is intriguing how Australia,

Canada, South Africa, and others, are only too willing to go along with the US desire so that they can do business with India,

giving up their long standing commitment to non-proliferation.

The issue which clinched the 123 agreement was India's offer to subject a new reprocessing facility, which will be built exclusively for this purpose, to IAEA safeguards in return for the consent to reprocess the spent fuel, even though the US president is on record as saying that enrichment and reprocessing are not necessary for a country to move forward with nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. India will be free to maintain and develop its nuclear arsenal.

The deal will not have any impact on this. In fact, with external resources available for its nuclear energy programme, it will be able to divert its internal resources for strengthening its strategic programme. 8 nuclear reactors out of 22, and an upcoming Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor, will remain dedicated for military purposes, outside the purview of IAEA.

Hence, in essence, India will enjoy all the powers of a nuclear weapons state under the NPT, especially if the Nuclear Suppliers Group of 45 countries also yields to the US-like concessions to India.

The US is going to campaign with the NSG to engage in

deal the global order has been changed. And it is right. It has upset the non-proliferation regime. Globally and regionally, it is going to lead to reconfiguration of forces, possibly leading to a renewed arms race.

The National Command Authority of Pakistan, which oversees the nuclear programme there, chaired by President Musharraf, has already expressed its displeasure at the deal and pledged to maintain (read upgrade) its credible minimum deterrence.

Pakistan views this deal as disturbing the regional strategic stability, and has asserted that it cannot remain oblivious to its security requirements.

An International Panel on Fissile Materials report predicts at least four to five times increase in India's weapons grade plutonium production rate. The present Indian stock is estimated to be sufficient for about 100 nuclear warheads. This is obviously alarming for Pakistan.

What India and Pakistan need, in the interest of the people of the sub-continent, is a mutually reassuring deal to suspend the nuclear arms race rather than something which will fuel the nuclear fire. The peace process undertaken by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Pervez Musharraf is in danger of being eclipsed by the US-India nuclear deal.

Judge Nuruzzaman of Metropolitan Special Tribunal-7 recorded statement of the witness and fixed today for next hearing of the case.

The case was filed on June 15 for possessing four bullets illegally at his Gulshan residence in the city on May 20.

The Daily Star

EID FASHION ALBUM 2007

Attention

Designers, Boutiques & Fashion Houses
Welcome to The Daily Star Fashion Album 2007

Once again as Eid approaches, The Daily Star prepares itself for the big occasion. This year as usual The Daily Star Fashion Catalogue 2007 will feature dresses and sarees of Eid collection plus write-ups describing the creative thinking behind the fashion wears & their creators. The Album represents itself as a source book for both buyers and sellers. Designers, boutiques and fashion houses are invited to participate in this unique fashion extravaganza.

For information regarding participation and placing advertisements please contact: Sasha Mansoor Chowdhury, Sapthak-2000, 96/97, New Eskaton Road, Dhaka-1000. Phone: 9350951-3, 01713015147 or Sher Ali, Advertisement Manager, The Daily Star Phone: 9144332.

Rules and Regulations

- The dresses and sarees should express the mood of the happy festival. The materials used for the sarees and dresses should be locally produced. The design should be original and the fabrics should suit our weather and environment.
- The dresses and sarees sent for the Album are returnable.
- The dresses and sarees should be handed over to Sapthak-2000 from 12 to 15 August, 2007.
- Per Entry Fee Tk 200.00 (minimum five entries).

Exclusive apartments

at Gulshan-2

1825 sft.

GENETIC
RICHMOND

GENETIC LIMITED

House - 19, Road - 49

Gulshan - 2

Tel: 8814551, 8824254, 8825150

8833832, 9891305, 9892825

Cell-Phone: 01720502435, 01720502436

01720502437, 01720502438

Fax: 88-02-8825941

email: info@geneticlimited.com

Web: www.geneticlimited.com

Sandeep Pandey received Ramo Magsaysay Award for emergent leadership in 2002.