

Textbook crisis again!

With the academic year of the secondary level students already in progress from this month, more than 50 percent of the students will have to wait for the books prescribed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) due to an artificial crisis alleged to have been created by NCTB itself and syndicates of textbook publisher and sellers. The situation, however, prevailing now is not new at all as the failure and indifference of the authority concerned have been reflected time and again.

But this year the crisis seems to be more acute than before. In the past, less number of books than the actual demand used to be published since about 30 percent of old books were recycled every year. But recently the syllabi of the secondary level students have been modified with the introduction of a new system, known as 'creative question method', which requires every student to buy a new set of books. This has caused the demand to rise.

Being fully aware of the new syllabus,

the NCTB's decision to print around two and a half crore books is puzzling; the actual demand is estimated to be over five crore. Interestingly, the textbook publishers and NCTB are blaming each other for the situation!

Teachers, students and guardians are facing a great problem in getting the required number of books to continue the academic activities. On top of that, many teachers are still unaware of the new teaching method as necessary training has not been imparted to them. If this situation goes on, the standard of education will suffer.

As a citizen of the country I express my deep concern and dissatisfaction over the situation. The government should tackle the issue of syndication with an iron hand, and the concerned authority must ensure availability of textbooks in the market without further delay.

Sarwar Hussain
Dept. of Computer Science & Engineering
University of Chittagong

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any of this. I urge our education minister and the concerned authority to take immediate action in this regard.

Mawduda Hasnina
Rajshahi

Rangpur University

After more than 30 years of politics of erection and uprooting of foundation stones of Rangpur University, it finally came into being in November, 2008. It not only met the dream of the people of Rangpur but also fulfilled a long cherished demand for higher education of this less developed region of northern Bangladesh. Within the shortest possible time, the university authority successfully completed the admission test, processed results and completed enrolment formalities with the help of college teachers hired for the purpose (as it had no teaching staff of its own). That is, the whole process took about a month, so that classes could start from 28 January as declared.

Meanwhile, the syndicate had finalised the selection committees for recruitment of teacher for six departments which was scheduled from 14 January so that the classes could commence as planned. But unfortunately, the Ministry of Education has asked the VC to stop the recruitment process of teachers, on the same day. Such an embargo may be logical for other universities, and for quite genuine reasons, but it is damaging for the newly established university.

As the situation stands now, without teachers the Rangpur University cannot start its academic activities, i.e. conduct of classes, formation of departmental courses committees, academic council etc., as per schedule. In short, this university cannot function properly and is likely to begin its journey with session jam in the coming years! This situation is now creating frustration among the students and the guardians.

Meanwhile, there is lot of speculations, fuelled by vested quarters, circulating among the people about the directive of the Ministry of Education that evidently goes against the image of government. Under this circumstance, we would request the government to lift the bar on recruitment of teachers for this newly established university immediately.

Dr. K. Maudoor Elahi

Former Pro-VC
National University
Pro-Vice Chancellor
Stamford University
Bangladesh
Dhaka

Seating row

Yes, the outgoing speaker has left behind his legacy while making the seating arrangements for the MPs. Thanks to the government party for accepting the situation peacefully and perhaps temporarily; otherwise, this could lead to a very unpleasant scene in the parliament.

One hopes that the BNP-Jamaat-led opposition will also nominate a reputed freedom fighter as the proposed second Deputy Speaker should they wish to take up that post.

M. Emad
Oxford, UK

Humongous bureaucracy

The bureaucracy that Bangladesh has today was the brainchild of the British colonial masters. It was known as the "Steel Frame" of British Raj. Rightly so, because it served the real purpose of the British, which was to extract taxes from the natives and plunder their wealth by all coercive means. Unfortunately, sixty years after their departure, this country is yet to get an efficient and effective civil service. The colonial footprint on the functioning of the administrative machinery is still very visible.

Politicalisation, nepotism and unethical expansion are matters of grave concern too. According to a newspaper report, the authority has promoted 72 JS to the rank of Additional Secretary against 20 vacant posts. Bangladesh needs a development-oriented civil service, which will cater to the real need of the people. The public servants have to work with the people not above the people.

An overall reorganization of the bureaucracy should take place sooner rather than later.

AK Shamsuddin

Mississauga
Canada

Sadek Hossain Khoka Sarak?

Recently I noticed a plaque in Gobibagh area mentioning "Sadek Hossain Khoka Sarak". The road is just behind the Sonali Bank quarters and near the ancestral house of our mayor. It is difficult to believe that it is a road. After 9am it becomes very difficult to cross the road as it turns into a workshop/garage. They repair different types of vehicles in the middle of the road forgetting the sufferings of the people. Nobody dares protest.

S.M. Rumen
Naya Bazar, West Nasirabad
Pahartali, Chittagong

Slumdog Millionaire

What a shocking experience! I just watched Slumdog Millionaire, the movie that won 4 Golden Globe awards this year and also got 10 Academy Award nominations. Obviously my expectation was pretty high before I got in to the theatre. But after watching the movie I now doubt the nomination process of these Hollywood awards.

The original story of the movie by Vikas Swarup is unique and highly commendable. In my opinion, that unique story was murdered by the two directors, Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan. The Western viewers may be thrilled by the naked picturisation of Mumbai's dirty slums, gang wars, starvation, child prostitution, using children for begging. But the way they projected the whole thing was very unrealistic.

Most part of the movie is in Hindi and I noticed shockingly that they didn't put enough English sub-title as

required. I really don't know how a Westerner is going to enjoy this movie without having proper and accurate subtitle. The worst part of the movie was at the end when the main actor and the actress perform a pretty cheap group dance on the railway platform. We have seen better group dances in other Hindi movies. Overall, music was not bad but we got lot better creations from A.R. Rahman.

After watching the movie, I really felt bad for Amir Khan who has made marvellous movies like 'Lagan' and 'Tare Zamin Par'. Both the movies failed to get any Hollywood award. These movies are way better than Slumdog Millionaire and deserved better recognition. The famous South Indian director, Mani Ratnam's 'Bombay' or 'Roja' are also better choices in my opinion. Unfortunately, Amir Khan and Mani Ratnam have serious race issues. They are not white.

Imon Hussain
Maryland, USA

Missing mug shots

I have tried to get used to not seeing the photos of your esteemed journalists on top of their articles. I have reminded myself how much I respect the editorial board and sternly told myself that such authoritative figures MUST know best - but it is no good, I don't like it.

I have tried to analyse why I find the absence of the 'mug shots' so disturbing and I think it is a mixture of the depersonalisation of the views and the help it was to remember a name and a face together rather than separately. Besides, I cannot identify quickly enough the ones I want to read first, like Nury Vittachi!

Please put them back!
Angela Robinson
One-mail

Diabetes

The number of diabetics in

our country is rising day by

day. But all of us are not aware

of this disease. The term

'diabetes' refers to a medical

condition caused by a lack of

insulin, and insulin is a very

essential chemical substance

produced in the human body,

which controls the amount of

sugar in the blood. Diabetes

deteriorates the injured part

of the body, causes serious

kidney problems and affects

the eyesight. The primary

symptoms are: producing lots

of urine, feeling very thirsty,

hungry and weak. The most

important thing is that, a

person may get this disease at

any age of his life. So, it is high

time we went for a medical

check-up and kept a good

discipline in life, especially by

taking a diabetic diet and

doing enough exercise every-

day.

S.M. Rumen

Naya Bazar, West Nasirabad

Pahartali, Chittagong

Ekushey Book Fair

Ekushey Book Fair is the largest

book fair in Bangladesh. With

February comes the book fair. We

wait for it the whole year. This fair

reminds us of our language move-

ment and the language martyrs -

Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Zabbar and

many more - who sacrificed their

lives for our mother tongue Bangla

in 1952. Ekushey Book Fair intro-

duces us to the new and the old

writers. We take vow standing here

to save our language Bangla and to

serve the nation.

Mahfuzur Rahman Manik

IER, University of Dhaka



PHOTO: DRINKNEWS

A young citizen's reaction

An article entitled 'What Is at

Stake' written by Sajeeb

Wazed was published in the

Forum, in its December '08

issue. I'd gone over it once

before 29 December general

election, and thrice or more

after it, with a view to getting

an impression about national

issues on which Sajeeb Wazed,

as a rising politician, wanted

to put emphasis. He tried his

best in his article to establish

two things, as I could find out.

Firstly as a political party, only

Bangladesh Awami League is

the party that can run the

country in the right way, and

secondly, for economic devel-

opment, some special policies

need to be adopted which

Awami League did in its last

regime, that's why then the

price-inflation was under

control.

In the election the grand

alliance led by Awami League

won more than two-third

majority and Awami League

reassumed state power, so

with more interest I studied the

write-up of Sajeeb Wazed.

He writes that as the past two

years and our previous mili-

tary interventions have

shown, you cannot reduce

corruption by suspending

democracy and arresting

everyone in sight, absolute

power corrupts absolutely. As

a young member of the new

generation, what the writer

expressed in his article is

commendable. However, Sajeeb Wazed had

promised good governance and development of democratic process if his party would be voted to power. I'd like to place here only two things which can be considered by the government and policymakers:

1. Control the ruling party's MP and the Ministers' family members.

2. Ensure justice and prevent discrimination in public recruitment process.

We all should know that the people are no more interested to allow any misrule and anti-people's activities by the political parties in power.

Kalyan Kar
Member

Institute of Thoughts and Development (ITD)
Dhaka

