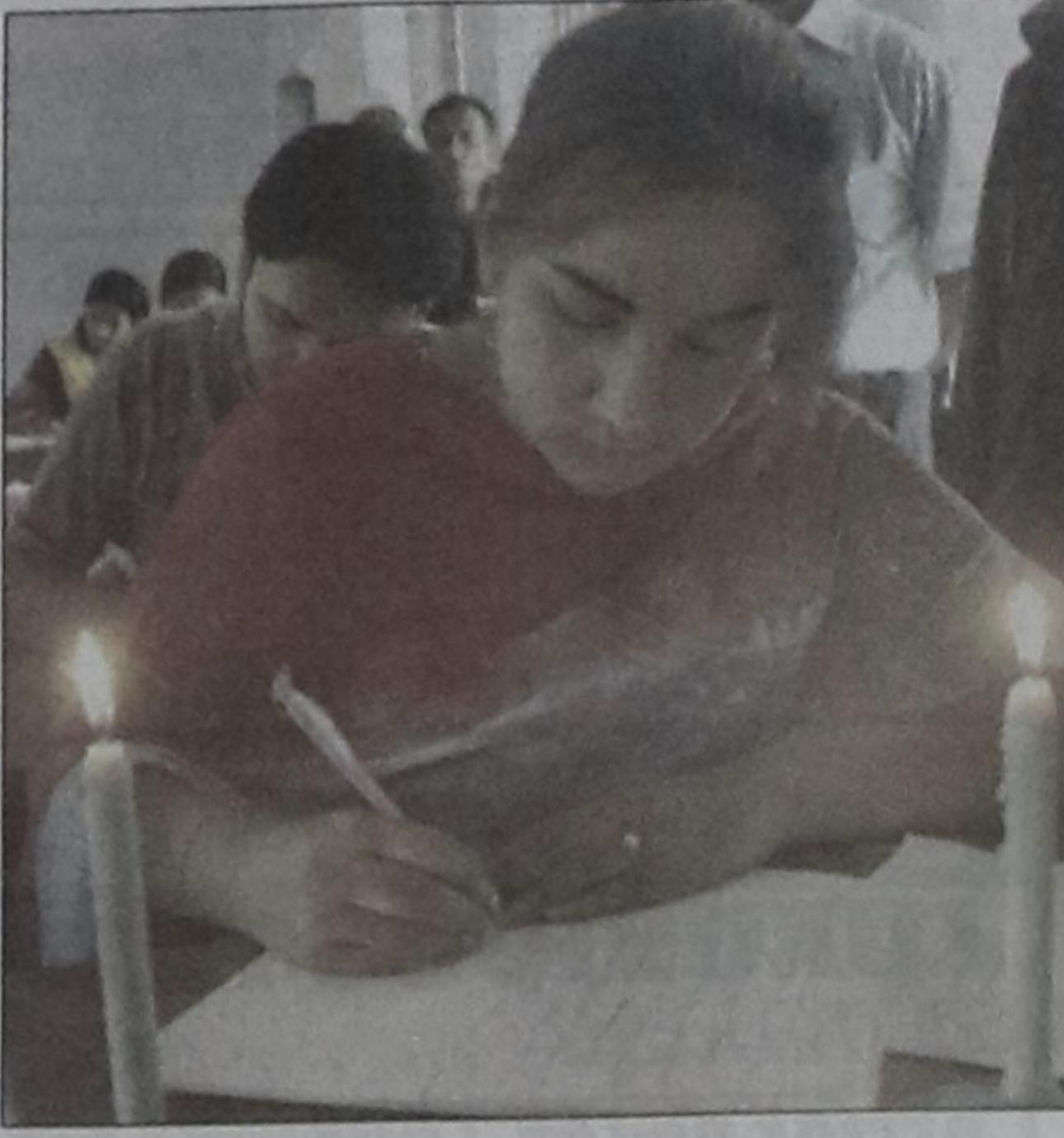


(Left) Students take an exam at the Notre Dame College centre in the city on the first day of the HSC examinations that began across the country yesterday. (Right) Examinees take their exam by the candlelight at a centre with insufficient daylight during the power outage. The photo was taken at Ispahani Degree College in Keraniganj.



49.7pc literate in country

Says BBS study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly half of the nation's 140 million adult citizens are proficient enough to read street flyers or calculate the amount of money spent in cellphone conversations, revealed a Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) study yesterday.

Titled 'Literacy Assessment Survey (LAS) 2008', the study was released at a seminar held at a city hotel. It presented an encouraging statistical portrait of the nation's literacy with the current rate at 49.7 percent compared to 41.5 percent in 2005.

The study, which was conducted nationwide, revealed that female literacy rate (50.2%) surpassed male literacy rate (49.4%) for the first time.

Speakers at the seminar said more education institutions for girls and several general sensitive programmes such as stipends undertaken by the government and other agencies were important reasons behind the high female score.

The study also showed a notable discrepancy in the literacy level among the urban (67.8%) and rural population (52.6%).

The bureau in association with Unesco randomly tested 12,096 individuals above 11 years in a representative sampling throughout the country with questions involving familiar and practical matters that people face everyday.

The respondents were picked from 504 primary sample units (PSUs) in six divisions and 64 districts. Their literacy skills were measured using four primary test instruments --

comprehension (words and literature), writing, arithmetic and general knowledge.

"We used a four-instrument method to conduct the survey which is more realistic and viable than the existing method where the only thing that used to be considered was whether the individual can write his or her name in a paper," said Nizamuddin Ahmed, former deputy director of BBS.

Based on their competence in literacy skills, the respondents were categorised in four sections -- non-literate, semi-literate, literate at the initial level and literate at the advanced level.

Presiding over the session, BBS Director General Habib Ullah Majumdar said, "We used a more realistic approach where an individual literate competency was measured through practical means. This makes the study more accurate and refined as a whole."

The study did not draw any conclusions about intelligence, rather it assessed reading, writing and numeric skills needed for everyday life and for civic activities.

Speaking as the chief guest, Planning Minister Alvee Marshal (retd) AK Khanda said, "Gender parity in primary and secondary education has already been ensured and it is also increasing gradually at the tertiary level. We will have to concentrate our devotion on improving the quality of education."

District education profile reports of Cox's Bazar and Lalmonirhat were also presented at the seminar. Education profile reports for other 62 districts will also be completed soon, BBS sources said.



Quami Olama Mashaikh Parishad holds a rally near Baitul Mukarram Mosque in the city yesterday, blocking the road.

Ensure welfare of people with disability: DU VC

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) Vice-chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique yesterday said access to information and communication technology (ICT) for people with disability should be ensured so that they can establish themselves in the society.

"People with disability face discrimination in many ways in the society. Access to ICT can ensure their empowerment and contribution to social development," he said while distributing certificates among the

visually impaired students and employees of the university.

A total of 36 visually impaired students of different departments and four employees of DU received certificates after completing a training on Information and Communication Technology.

The training programme was organised by Young Power in Social Action in association with Sightsavers International at DU central library to provide visually impaired people with technological knowledge so that they can contribute to

national development.

The VC called upon people from all walks of life to come forward to help ensure rights and welfare of people with disability.

Emeritus Prof Dr Sultana Saroja Ara Jaman presided over the function which was also addressed by acting librarian Khandaker Fazlur Rahman, Country Director of Sightsavers International Dr Wahidul Islam and Managing Director of Jatiya Protibondhi Unnayan Foundation Mansur Ahmed Chowdhury.

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