

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Primary results

This is for the first time the country has witnessed the public examination of primary school students of class five drawing appreciation and little criticism for the authorities concerned, 88.84 percent students passed in the examination. It is encouraging to see that the number of first division holders outnumbers the second and third division holders.

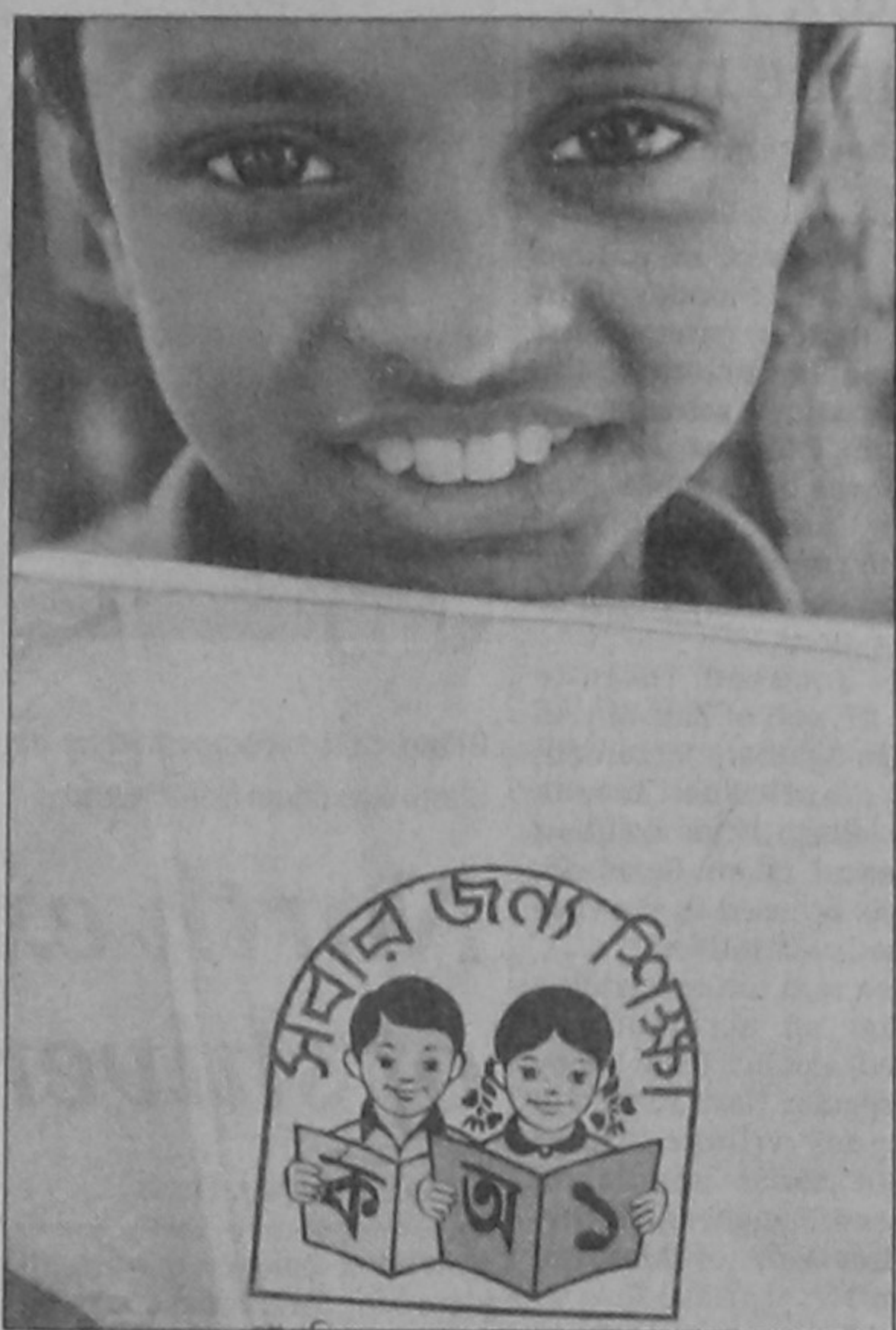
Out of these graduates, 50 thousand will get talent-pool and general scholarship which is undoubtedly an innovative idea to increase the quality of education. In the past there was no arrangement to know about the merit of primary school goers nationwide and uniformly. Only the students (barely 40 percent) who participated in the scholarship exams were considered as the brighter students and the whole school and teachers focused their attention on them. The rest 60 percent remained neglected. Now all will get almost equal attention in the class. Teachers' responsibility has also been brought under stocktaking.

The chronic weakness in Mathematics and English has been proved once again in this public examination. No student passed from 1,937 schools. Two lakh students failed and they failed mainly in English and Mathematics, though 10 to 13 grace marks were given to boost the pass percentage.

To conduct such a massive examination is definitely a tremendous job on the part of the government. So, it deserves thanks and appreciation from all of us.

Md. Masum Billah

Senior Manager: BRAC Education Programme, PACE



ADMAN DRINKINS

National agricultural policy

Quite a number of my friends and colleagues have been asking me about the progress in the formulation of the National Agricultural Policy. Well, by now the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) has made good progress by floating the draft policy prepared by the Technical Working Group (TWG) in the national newspapers and on the Internet.

Appropriate opinions/comments were incorporated into the draft national agricultural policy. Now the final draft policy will be processed for official approval by the higher authorities including the Cabinet.

The meeting expressed the hope that the National Agricultural Policy will be published in the beginning of the New Year 2010.

This writer also attended the meeting as a TWG member.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System, SAU
Dhaka

Liberation war and related issues

I read with deep interest Syed Badrul Ahsan's article 'Wars, duplicity and worlds destroyed' published today in DS (23rd Dec) in which Mr. Ahsan writes:

"Think here of the war the Pakistani military junta of Yahya Khan imposed on the Bengalis in March 1971. The dictator took unabashed recourse to lies when he accused Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of engaging in conspiracy to dismember Pakistan even as the Bengali leader attempted negotiating

a constitutional way out of the crisis with Yahya Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto."

As the Awami League waited, all day on March 24 and 25, for word from the regime about a transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people of Pakistan, the regime stayed silent. On the evening of March 25, Yahya Khan surreptitiously flew out of Dhaka only hours before his henchmen launched their genocide.

That remark of this article struck me very deeply. If I have understood the point and the implication correctly, Bangladesh was created due to 'unabashed recourse to lies' of Yahya and Bhutto and NOT because Sheikh Mujib planned so and worked for creating an independent Bangladesh(?).

I bring this issue not for discussing ghastrly politics but to learn the truth. I firmly believe that we need to know the correct history of our independence. The present President and the Prime Minister always urge upon the Bengali nation to know the correct history. I salute them for this and I hope they mean history based on truth and nothing but the truth.

I would request the distinguished writers of DS to throw light without bias, prejudice or favour, on the issue.
Tayeb Husain
Lund, Sweden

DST

The present government is doing a number of good work but one fails to understand why they are exposing themselves to criticism through making mistakes which could have been avoided. Day Saving Time has become a sore point for everybody, particularly the young moth-

ers and children. One wonders whether it has been imposed on us by a third country. Otherwise, why the govt should be so stubborn despite the fact that majority of the people are against it. We are now one and a half hour ahead of India which means our international business closes 90 minutes early if the office time is up to 5:00pm in India. This provides more business opportunities for our competitors in the neighbouring countries. This is also funny to note that a cabinet meeting is needed to say 'no' or 'yes' to such a small issue.

The 'name game' is another issue which does not speak well for the present government's 'Din bodoler pala'.
A conscious citizen
One-mail

A ridiculous comment

It was a ridiculous remark that the former prime minister of Britain, Tony Blair, made a few days back to the world media. He supported the attack on Iraq!!

If any country had the right to attack another country, the attacked country would have the same right to launch a counter attack.

Md. Abdul Wahab
East Jurain, Dhaka

Nursing

Nursing is a noble profession. The service of a nurse is very important and essential for society. When a sick or wounded person comes to a hospital, nurses look after him carefully. In wartime their services are more important and essential. Once the job of nursing was looked upon with disdain. But with the advancement of modern science and technology, the narrow out-

look has undergone a radical change. Now nobody neglects this profession. However, if anybody wants to be a nurse he or she will have to complete a training course. After completing the course successfully nurses are employed in hospitals and clinics. Besides professional training, a good nurse must possess some good qualities, such as patience, devotion, attention and dedication.

To be a nurse, one should follow the footsteps of Florence Nightingale, the forerunner of nursing services.

Abdul Azim
Department of English
International Islamic University Chittagong

Gulshan in bad shape

When will the authorities open their eyes and look around at the pathetic condition of the city, Gulshan in particular? The roads are full of potholes and the Gulshan/Banani lake is smelling to high heaven. All kinds of waste and debris are found floating on the lake.

We the citizens pay our taxes without fault, but what do we get in return?

There has been no maintenance of the roads or the cleaning of the streets except the main roads for years.
Please do something!

Azra Azad
Gulshan, Dhaka

Open and distance learning

Recently, I saw some articles published on Open and Distance Education in different dailies. Many of the articles were in favour of Distance Education and few were against it.

As a citizen, I have some points as well as doubts about this type of Teaching or Education method.

On 14 Dec '09, Prof Manzurul Islam described many more points in favour of it in an article published in your newspaper. I myself believe that it should run in our country not only in the public sector but also in the private sector to make it more competitive. Proper monitoring should be ensured before the permission is given.

We should use the technology-based education method to make it more dynamic.

We may not have enough teachers to teach, but we can train them and separate those teachers from the conventional system so that they do not mix themselves up with both the systems.

To create a Digital Bangladesh, we don't have any choice except introducing technology based methods in all sectors.

Md. Jahirul Haque
Gawair, Dakshinshinhan
Dhaka

FM radio

Nowadays FM radio, one of the greatest sources of entertainment, has become an integral part in our everyday life as mobile phone. FM radio has earned so much popularity that it is now more advanced than any other media. We can be updated hearing the FM radio. If we tune to the FM we can easily get the news update, traffic update, sports update, weather update, even flight update etc.

It gives us the real opportunity to get relieved from regular monotonous work. But we should not become FM radio addicts!

Mohammad Zia-Ul-Haque
Eng. Department
International Islamic University Ctg.

Ground reality!

Your story which highlighted the reckless driving of General Ershad's son (24 December) saddened me greatly. It summed up our country's problems in a nutshell.

In any civilised society this boy would have been punished for reckless driving, injuring innocent bystanders and leaving the scene of the crime. Some form of compensation should also have been made available to those injured by his foolish antics.

But in our beloved Bangladesh a section of society seems to be above the law. A phone call by someone with 'status' is often all it will take to have crimes erased from our law enforcers' memories. Money and power always hold sway above justice.

Iqbal Islam Chowdhury
Dhaka

Accesses to the services

Women and poverty

The government must address growing gender pay inequity and ensure that superannuation is equitably split in situations of divorce.

Accesses to the services

Climate and science

In an article, the world famous McGill University's School of Environment make the case for abandoning emission reduction targets in favour of a technology-led climate policy. Let the global technology race begin, setting out an alternative route to emission reductions, one that, unlike the emission-reduction target approach, really has the capability of eventually stabilizing climate. The fixation on near-term targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions at the climate meeting in Copenhagen has resulted in insufficient attention towards the technological means of achieving them.

Instead of making emission reduction targets, researchers suggest an alternative technology-led approach.

A technology-led climate policy would replace emissions targets with credible long-term global commitments to invest in energy R&D. These commitments would be financed by a low, \$5.00 per tonne charge on emitted carbon dioxide. Over time the charge

would gradually rise, doubling, say, every ten years, thereby providing inducements to deploy and diffuse low carbon technologies when they are ready.

Researchers argue that a technology-led climate policy is needed because stabilizing climate is a huge technological challenge and the solution of ready-to-deploy, scalable low carbon technologies is far from being a reality. An energy technology revolution, which would transform our energy and energy-using systems, is required in order to eliminate the threat to the global climate system of increasing concentrations of atmospheric carbon.

If the road from Copenhagen is to be paved with success, something very different than impossible-to-keep commitments to emissions reductions-targets are needed.

Avik Sengupta
Biochemistry
McGill University, Montreal, Canada



AFP

provided by the government are not always readily accessible to those who need such services. There appears to be little attention paid to educating and targeting such people. This goes back to the roots of education in our community. Unless people are educated as to where they may obtain help, and be encouraged to do so, they will ever remain in the 'poverty trap'.

Mohammad Rajja
Member, Nepal student society
Dhaka

DMP's new toys and eyewash

We have read about the DMP's old toys, the CCTV cameras etc (Tk 61 crores) and now their latest, the multi crore "automatic traffic control lights" on road intersections together with "lanes" demarcated on the VIP roads for slow and fast motorized vehicles. All very progressive indeed!!! My experience last Sunday to receive my son-in-law from the 11:am Emirates flight was a nightmare, however.

We left at 10:am and travelled, Niketon-Gulshan-Ave-Kemal Ataturk-Airport Road and reached there around 10.50 without too much fuss. We left the airport at 12.45pm and from the start it was at snail's pace with bumper traffic on Airport Road- Mohakhali- Gulshan South Avenue-Niketon, arriving at home at 02.50pm (2 hrs 5 minutes for a 30 minute journey). Whether the new traffic lights were working or not, I do not know, but I saw plenty of cops waving their arms and batons. With lots of time to observe the movement of traffic at very close quarters, I would sub-divide them as follows in terms of numbers: 60% private cars (very few carrying more than one passenger), 30% buses (chockfull of peasants) and 10% CNGs and others. In terms of occupying road space, it would be 80% private cars, 15% buses and 5% CNGs and others. I did not see much improvement in cars keeping to their lanes, they were weaving about much as usual as there was no supervision!

Who will answer these questions: 1) Who will benefit from these traffic improvements? 2) How many roads in Dhaka are broad enough to have multi-lanes? 3) What happens when the lights go blink as they surely will do regularly? 4) How many traffic cases have been instituted since these rules were enforced and how many were for private cars and how many for buses and CNGs? 5) How many private cars have been fined or towed away for illegal parking on public roads? 6)

What have the authorities in store for rickshaws who carry 50%+ of Dhaka's population every day and rickshaw vans who transport more goods than all the trucks that bring in produce from outside Dhaka?

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

justice for the poor

The new Chief Justice of Bangladesh, Md. Tafazzul Islam in his recent oath taking ceremony vowed to ensure justice for all, especially for the poor. Congratulations, Honourable Chief Justice, for your vision which the nation badly needs.

Justice Islam also rightly observed while talking to The Daily Star (as reported on 24 December 2009) that ensuring justice and rule of law is necessary for democracy in the country.

The existence of democracy also facilitates to have the rule of law and people's access to justice, among other things.

Access to justice is a basic human right, and in case of Bangladesh a fundamental right as well; to ensure and facilitate peoples access to a fair justice system is the responsibility of the State.

During the Fall Semester (September-December) 2009, I undertook a graduate seminar course named Law, Race and Social Psychology at the University of Minnesota Law School. From the studies, I came to know how the race profile and attitudes of the juror could impact a trial process and verdict. This is just one example. The same goes for who are at the police stations, detention centres and other related service centres, and who are going there.

For facilitating (I am not saying ensuring, that is a far expected goal in case of ours) an effective justice system in Bangladesh, there is a lot to do. For me, the important thing is the aim and goal of the persons who are in the bars and benches. This could change a lot, and immediately too.

There is no denying that to get better lawyers and judges we need quality legal and human rights education systems. However, the situation is unfortunately frustrating in Bangladesh. This needs a through overhauling. We also need to initiate the scope to study human rights, social sciences, languages for law students.

Dr. Uttam Kumar Das
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
and Humphrey Fellow
University of Minnesota Law School
United States of America

Arresting tobacco use

Your staff correspondent's report on 23 December on the global increase in tobacco consumption presents a gloomy international outlook.

Unfortunately, even the WHO, also has not taken any positive steps to wean us away from this bad habit, which is definitely bad for our health. What is the situation in Bangladesh; is it more or less than the world average?

It may be possible to extrapolate the data from analysing the VAT paid on cigarette and bidi manufactured over the last four or five years.

To reduce the habit of smoking, the government should gradually increase VAT on tobacco products say by 2.5 to 5 percent, each financial year and follow the revenue trend to see if tobacco usage is decreasing or not.

This may help us to find if an increase in retail price of tobacco products leads to reduction in smoking.

Although smoking is a bad habit, and bad for our health, the government is not keen to prohibit its use strongly, as the lucrative duty and VAT from tobacco products is a good source of government revenue! Hence, the government has not gone for outright ban on cigarette and bidi manufacture and consumption.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Lessons of Karbala

The day of 'Shahadat-e-Karbala' on the 10th of Muharram is the great 'Martyrdom Day' of the Muslims.

The lesson of the martyrdom is the promise of 'Kalema' i.e. the root message of a faithful life, and the holy martyrdom of the Imam (RA) is also the supreme example of sacrifice which distinguishes between truth and falsehood.

Remaining steadfast to truth and not accepting any oppressor in the disguise of either Muslim or non-Muslim is the lesson of this day.

This day proves that the deviant, oppressor and evil forces in the disguise of Muslims are heinous foes of Iman (Faith). Even if those remain unrecognized, the relation to truth i.e. the existence of Iman must be at stake. Getting freed from the grip of falsehood, injustice, oppression, extortion, as well as a truth and justice based universal state and governance are directions of 'Shahadat-e-Karbala'.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Madrasa
Chittagong

Migratory birds

Bird migration is the usual cyclic flight undertaken by numerous species of birds. Bird movements take in those made in response to changes in food availability, habitation or climate. Migration is marked by its annual seasonality. On the contrary, birds that are non-migratory are assumed to be sedentary or resident.

Bangladesh is a favourite place for many migratory birds, especially some of the exotic places such as the campus of Jahangirnagar University, National Monument and many more. People tend to visit those places to enjoy the movement of these pretty visiting birds. We are lucky to receive these seasonal guests.

However, human behaviours have threatened lots of migratory bird species. The distances concerned in bird migration indicate that they frequently cross political boundaries of countries and conservation measures require global collaboration. A number of international treaties have been signed to conserve migratory species including the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 of the US and the African-Eurasian Migratory Water bird accord.

The concentration of birds during resettlement can put species at risk. A number of stunning migrants have already left extinct, the most distinguished being the Passenger Pigeon. Hunting along the migratory route can also take a heavy toll. The populations



LITON RAHMAN/DRINKINS

of Siberian Cranes that wintered in India declined because of hunting along the route, particularly in Afghanistan as well as Central Asia. Birds were last seen in their favourite wintering grounds in Keoladeo National Park in 2002.

Structures such as power lines, wind farms and offshore oil-rigs have also been known to have an effect on migratory birds. Surroundings annihilation by land use

changes is nevertheless the largest threat and shallow wetlands which are stopover and wintering sites for migratory birds are mostly threatened by draining and reclamation for human use. To invite these seasonal guests and provide them the best hospitality, the ideal conditions have to be retained.

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