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High priority, grim reality

Half the nation remains illiterate for poor planning, allocation, project-oriented approach; govt still eyes total literacy by 2014

Wasim Bin Habib

Inadequate budgetary allocations for education, poor planning and irregularities have left almost half the country's population illiterate although governments in the last 39 years talked about giving utmost priority to the sector.

As the country observes International Literacy Day today, around 3.73 crore people between 11 and 45 years old are illiterate in Bangladesh, says non-formal education mapping report 2009.

YEAR	LITERACY RATE
1971	16.8 %
1974	25.9 %
1991	35.3 %
2001	47.9 %(15 above)
2003	65 %(7 above)
2008	48.8 %(15 above)
2009	53 %(7 above)

The country marks this year's literacy day through events on the theme "Literacy and women's empowerment".

When Bangladesh became independent in 1971, the literacy rate was abysmal, 16.8 percent. Ever since, successive governments have allocated the highest budget to this sector but failed to bring any significant results.

As of 2009, the country's

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

People exit from Bashundhara City after Eid shopping while the clock is ticking 12:30am today. Days ahead of Eid, shopping by city dwellers has picked up pace.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Night abuzz with Eid shoppers

Sohel Parvez

Colourful balloons and festoons catch eyes as one enters the atrium of the mall. A red car, decorated with ribbons and balloons, is placed on the way to the elevators filled by shoppers of all ages.

Some are going upstairs while some are coming down, holding shopping bags containing clothes, footwear and so on.

Outside the mall, a gentle breeze keeps the colourful festoons swaying on the flag poles fixed a couple of yards away from the footpath. On the main road, vehicles stand in a tailback and their cacophony of horn honking break the silence of midnight atmosphere.

It was 12:15am Sunday. An elderly woman, accompanied by two adolescent girls, came out slowly from the country's biggest shopping mall, Bashundhara City on Panthapath in the capital.

Holding two shopping bags in hand, she stood on the edge of the steps of the mall like

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Anthrax in Lalmonirhat

76 suspected to be affected

Staff Correspondent

Seventy-six more people are suspected to have contracted anthrax in sadar and Kaliganj upazilas of Lalmonirhat.

The health and livestock officials are yet to confirm whether anthrax has spread to the district, as lab tests of the samples, collected from the infected people, are still going on.

The number of infected people in the district might be confirmed today, they said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Stalking victim kills herself

Stalkers beat a man to death for protesting harassment

Star Report

A schoolgirl in Satkhira yesterday killed herself by taking poison reportedly after failing to bear the brunt of stalking. In Chapainawabganj a man was beaten to death by stalkers as he protested teasing of his colleague's wife and daughter.

The deceased girl, Chameli Khatun, 14, daughter of Shafiqul Islam of Manderbaria village at Koira upazila, Khulna, was residing at her maternal uncle's house here at Rajarbagan, reports our Satkhira correspondent.

She was a student of Pallimongal High School in Satkhira town.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

PM opens 4 projects in Ctg today

Staff Correspondent, *Ctg*

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is going to inaugurate the 3rd Karnaphuli bridge and three other projects here today taking the port city one step ahead towards development and progress.

After landing at Patiya, on the other bank of the Karnaphuli, around 11:00am, the PM is scheduled to open the 150-megawatt Peaking Power Plant at about 11:30am.

She would address a public meeting at the adjoining

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Non-govt Teachers

Banks asked to keep open for delivery of salaries

Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Bank yesterday asked commercial banks to keep their branches open to help non-governmental teachers collect their salaries and bonuses before Eid.

The directive came after a meeting between Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid and Bangladesh Bank

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Sohag holding a table fan and Formajul with a TV antenna come out of Rajshahi Jail yesterday. They are among death row inmates of Jubo Dal leader Gama killing case pardoned by the president. They brought along the antenna and table fan when they went to jail.

PHOTO: STAR

Wholesale pardon under question

14 out of 20 death convicts in Gama killing case step out of jail; president's mercy draws mixed reaction

Kailash Sarkar *and* Ashutosh Sarkar

The law ministry had recommended President Zillur Rahman to grant clemency to the 20 death row inmates convicted in the Gama killing case.

Fourteen of the 20 convicts were released from Dhaka and Rajshahi central jails early yesterday. Six were not released as they have other charges against them, said jail officials.

The ministry made the recommendation after scrutinising the court's verdict, evidence and documents. It also considered the convicts' age and financial condition of their families, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed told The Daily Star.

"We have only given our opinion to the president that he can grant mercy if he desired," he said.

Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder said according to Article-49 of the constitution, the president has absolute power to grant mercy to any convict.

The article said, "The president shall have power to grant pardons, reprieves and respites and to remit, suspend or commute and sentence passed by any court, tribunal or other authority."

This presidential clemency, however, generated mixed reaction among eminent jurists and rights activists.

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I am Rafique. I am 12 years old. I like swimming.
My name is Selim. I live near the Mosque. I love to eat mangoes
I am Mithila. I read in class seven in Bandura High School. I enjoy reading.
I am Arun, I like fishes. My favourite fish is Hilsha!
This is Mahua Chakma. I love my parents very much.
I wish all my friends a happy Eid. Shawkat Ali
In this Eid vacation we are having a great plan.
We are going to Cox's Bazar, the longest beach in the world. Nasir
EIS wishes you all a very happy Eid Mubarak
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