



EDUCATION

LISTEN TO THEM!

NILIMA JAHAN

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

"This is my last time, God knows what happened, but I am not at all tensed for it. As there is no assurance about equal opportunity for all, who cares about my merit?" asks Shirin Sultana, a candidate of the 36th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination, who appeared at the BCS exam thrice but somehow, could not be able to make herself a cadre. Shirin started her preparation for the BCS examination since her first year in the University life. She used to appear at the exam with the best efforts, but all her hopes ended in smoke always.

Clearly desperate for the post of a BCS cadre, Shirin is still preparing herself for the nectar, where the value of her merit is not equally judged for the ongoing quota system. And this is the most terrible but primitive obstacle for BCS candidates as they do not get the proper value of their indomitable merit.

Like Shirin, there are many students preparing for the BCS and hence, usually start their preparation from the early university life. But as it is a very competitive exam and every year, on an average, one lakh fifty thousand to two lakhs students seat for it, usually it is tough to prove one easily. Apart from these, there are many valid

reasons which are responsible for the disillusion of one's dream. According to many BCS candidates, the ongoing quota system, lengthy process, question patterns, transparency and accountability in assessment system-all these things must be reviewed as well as re-built; otherwise their efforts will not be properly evaluated.

The running quota system for the BCS exam is a great hindrance for the valuation of one's merit. We know, now the quota for merit is only 44 percent where for others, it is 56 percent. Of the 56 percent, for freedom fighters son/daughter/ grandson/granddaughter, it is 30, for women-10, district- 10, ethnic groups-5, and for the disabled it is 1 percent. It is nothing but a discrimination for which merit cannot get the opportunity to lead the country and the meritorious students are greatly deprived of better position.

Even, in the Article 19(1) of our constitution, there is an act ensuring equal opportunity for all Bangladeshi. It says "The state shall Endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens." According to the students, 45 percent quota for merit is just a violation of this act as it does not ensure opportunity for all. Again, Article 29(1) refers to the equality of opportunity in public employment in more precise way. It represents, "There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in respect of employment or office in the service of the republic".

"Yes, quota is important for the advancement of the backward section of a country, especially for the developing countries like us. But the percentage should be reduced", says Shafiqul Islam, a cadre, General Education at Government City College, Chittagong. "I think the freedom fighters children or grandchildren should get necessary facilities from the government in other way so that through those facilities, they can compete with their merit", adds Islam. According to many, the quota for women should be reduced to 5 percent as women are already getting preferences in every sector now-a-days.

When contacted to the authority about their plans on the existing quota system, Professor Dr. Sharif Enamul Kabir, a member of Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC), politely refused to comment on the issue as he was not authorised to do so.

Apart from these, the overall processing period is also lengthy -- taking more than a year and a half. The

students claim that the authority should be kind on this issue as it kills their valuable time. Again, the Public Service Commission never reveals the evaluation of the scripts. "They should at least give the correct answers of the preliminary test, so that we can know the right answers," claims Asma Akhter, another BCS candidate. Even, the BPSC does not make public the reservation of quota too.

As the authority recruits best citizens through the BCS exam to lead the country, they should be more transparent and accountable at their activities. And, the students are still hoping so. They want that the authority should pay heed to their rights and demands; otherwise, the number of ineffective persons will increase in national level which will ultimately result in a national burden.



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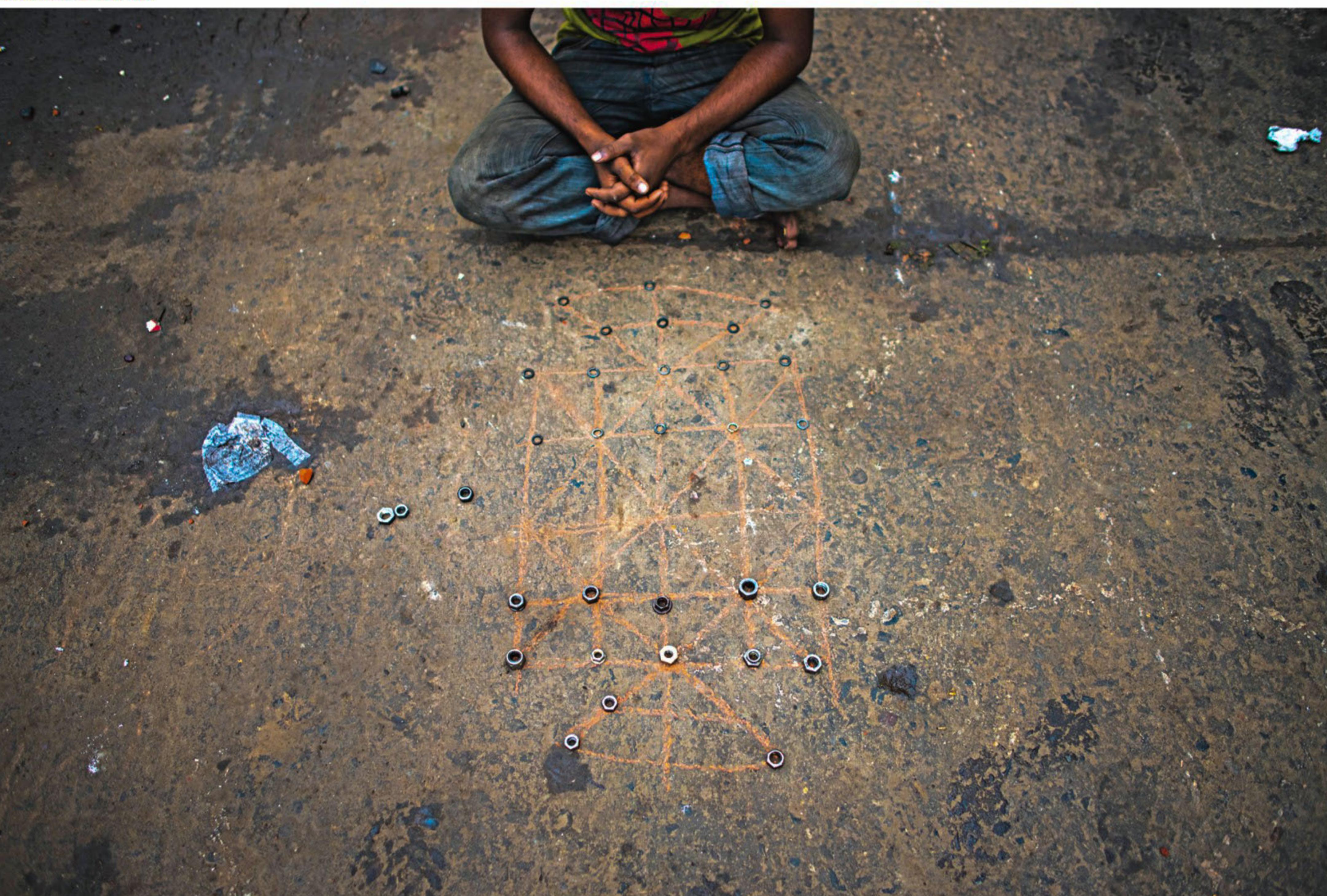
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SHUTTERSTORIES



LIFE IN THE ABYSS OF CIVILISATION

Photos : AVISHEK BHATTACHARJEE

Text: MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN



Their faces have been marred by dust and sweat. Every day, they go through the never ending struggle of finding sustenance in the heap of dirt, wastes and life-decaying metallic shards, nuts and bolts. However, they cannot feel what they are losing and how their lives are decaying away as their feeling of loss and grief has long been dead. These photos have tried to reveal the untold stories of these people hidden in the rubble of civilisation.