VISUAL: **TEENI AND TUNI**

Making room for Bangla in our public schools

Dr Jasimuz Zaman *and* **Matilal Pal** *are co-authors of 'Quality Education for Rural Bangladesh,' a book based on their work with rural high schools over the last decade.*

JASIMUZ ZAMAN *and* **MATILAL PAL**

Though language helps us get to the root of finding meaning in our existence, we have long neglected learning Bangla properly in Bangladesh's education system. The rapid decline in the quality of education in the country after liberation led to a rise in people moving towards a separate system of private education with English as the medium of instruction. Later, even the government joined the bandwagon by launching an English version of the national curriculum. But research has shown that the use of a language different from one's mother tongue at the primary level acts as a barrier for a child's cognitive development and their enjoyment of learning. Unesco has found the use of one's mother tongue as being crucial for avoiding knowledge gaps and for increasing the speed of learning and comprehension in children.

Education which does not accommodate one's mother tongue in the early years can be unproductive, ineffective, and can have a negative impact on children's overall education. The new initiative of the government for reforming the education system has not addressed the urgent need of the country for having an effective medium of instruction. In actuality, it has exacerbated the problem by putting more emphasis on improving students' English skills at the primary level. This will act as a hindrance to the intellectual development of children in the public education system. It is also widely recognised that a child can pick up a new language quite well if it is introduced to them during primary school. In fact, mastery over one's mother tongue helps to learn a new language rapidly and more effectively.

Teaching Bangla has historically not been given adequate importance in the Bangladeshi school system and, consequently, there is an acute lack of ability amongst the youth in expressing and writing in Bangla. Students entering high school thus do not have good command over Bangla, often lacking reading and pronunciation skills. As such, they also struggle to properly comprehend the study materials of different subjects from Class 6 onwards. The situation is made worse by the widespread habit of not reading books outside the school's curriculum. Besides, many underprivileged high schools, particularly in rural areas, lack any library facilities. The abysmal condition of Bangla writing on social media platforms exemplifies the enormity of this problem perfectly.

Increasingly, there has been less and less literature of high quality in the Bangla curriculum. The new curriculum for Bangla in Classes 6 and 7 did put emphasis on learning Bangla through a functional approach, but it lacks strength in terms of its Bangla literature syllabus. Literature invokes thought, develops creative thinking, and often requires careful reading so that students can properly comprehend the author or poet's meaning.

In addition to the creative and developmental roles of language studies, there is a practical need for every educated person to be well-versed in their own language. Bangla is now the medium of instruction in the public education system at all levels, though English is more required for acquiring advanced degrees in different disciplines. There are not enough materials available in Bangla at those levels.

In order to overcome the shortcomings related to Bangla in our public education system, at least up to Class 10, there are some specific steps that can be taken. Students should be taught Bangla from Class 1 to Class 5, with emphasis on all aspects of the language – vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The textbooks should be designed using materials that young learners can absorb with enjoyment and enthusiasm.

Bangla learning in Classes 6 to 10 should involve teaching essays, stories, and poems of increasing difficulty. The content in the curriculum should include Bangla translations of pieces of literature from other languages as well. This will help open up the imagination of students, giving them a glimpse of the world outside.

In order to teach Bangla, teachers must have a good grasp on language teaching. The success of the curriculum demands immediate training on the right pedagogy to suit the new curriculum. An innovative and compact method of training that empowers teachers to conduct classes in an effective manner has to be designed.

While augmenting the teaching of Bangla up to Class 10, the government should undertake a mega-project inviting authors to produce Bangla versions of advanced level books from different disciplines which are in other languages (particularly in English), or write their own books in Bangla.

The changes in the curriculum should play a positive role in developing students' skills in Bangla. However, adequate training for teachers has been missing. The crucial role played by Bangla in the intellectual development of children must therefore be duly recognised.

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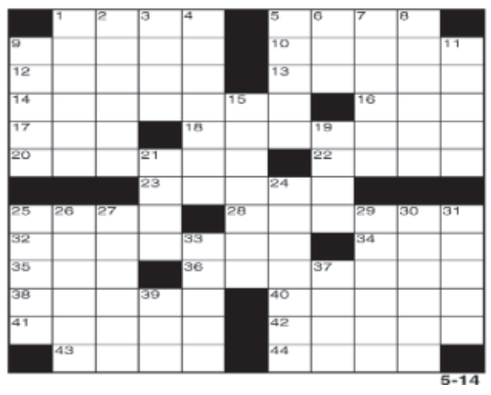
CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Stir up
5 Hip-hop songs
9 Kidney-related
10 Island greeting
12 "... to fetch – of water"
13 Blue Grotto setting
14 De Sade novel
16 Comic Caesar
17 Noshed
18 Rome's – Chapel
20 Bully
22 Printer's supplies
23 Smithy sight
25 Scorch
28 Cast makeup
32 Ordinary
34 Sturgeon eggs
35 Mess up
36 Soup cracker
38 Milking seat
40 Cheering wildly
41 Baseball's Joe
42 Carter and Gwyn
43 Collars
44 Owner's document

DOWN
1 Good name
2 "Be right with you"
3 Milk, to Marcel
4 Writer Ralph
5 Indy events
6 Menu phrase
7 Visits unexpectedly
8 Become smaller
9 Prince of India
11 Staffers
15 Grunge group
19 Pinball no-no
21 Bakery buy
24 Onetime Danish province
25 Wave's top
26 Seuss pachyderm
27 Dawn goddess
29 Jim Palmer, once
30 Jimmy's successor
31 Prophetic ones
33 Keys
37 Corner
39 Sphere



5-14

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

V	O	W	S			S	L	A	P	
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	T	O	R	O	S		T	O	S	S
		N	E	W		H	E	R		
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O	R	E		W	E	A	S	E	L	S
I	N	C	R	O	W	D		C	E	O
L	A	T	E	R		E	N	T	E	R
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	E	D	D	Y			O	D	E	S

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

South Asia's human capital is the resilience it needs

Martin Raiser *is the World Bank vice president for South Asia.*

MARTIN RAISER

The last few years have ushered in a harsh new reality where crises are the norm rather than the exception. Pandemics, economic slumps, and extreme weather events were once tail-end risks – but all three have hit South Asia in rapid succession since 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic alone has put millions of lives and livelihoods at risk, and its impacts have so far undermined decades of development gains.

This is deeply distressing because the knowledge, skills, and health that people accumulate – their human capital – is a critical source of the resilience that countries rely on for recovery. To strengthen resilience and protect the well-being of future generations, governments across South Asia need to take urgent policy action and invest in human capital.

South Asia's people are its biggest asset, but they remain wastefully underutilised. With nearly half its population under the age of 24 and over one million young people set to enter the labour force every month until 2030, the region could reap an enviably high demographic dividend. But South Asia is also home to over one-third of the world's stunted children.

South Asian governments on average spend just one percent of their respective GDPs on health and 2.5 percent on education. In comparison, the global average is 5.9 percent on the former and 3.7 percent on the latter.

Against this background, the Covid-19 pandemic, which pushed an additional 35 million people across South Asia into extreme poverty, dealt an unprecedented blow to the region's human capital. Among its most woeful impacts is a rise in learning poverty, or the inability to read and understand a simple text by age 10. While around the world, on average, schools remained closed for in-person learning between 2020 and 2022 for 141 days, in South Asia they were shut for 225 days. Coupled with ineffective remote instruction, this increased South Asia's learning poverty from 60 percent to 78 percent.

The poorest and most vulnerable people fell further behind. For example, in Bangladesh, the poorest students lost 50 percent more in terms of learning than the richest students. Several countries still show little to no signs of recovery, and South Asia's students could lose up to 14.4 percent of their future earnings.

While the outlook is grim, it is important to remember that properly designed and implemented interventions can make a difference if governments act fast. Recent evidence suggests that even simple and low-cost education programmes can lead to sizable gains in skills. In Bangladesh, for example, attending a year of additional preschool through two-hour sessions significantly improved literacy, numeracy, and social-development scores. Meanwhile, in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, six months of extra remedial classes after school helped students catch up on about two-thirds of lost learning linked to 18 months of school closures. And in Nepal, government teachers ran a phone tutoring programme that helped increase students' foundational numeracy by 30 percent.

Given the high returns to human capital, the huge losses inflicted by the pandemic, and the region's vulnerability to a variety of shocks, even with constrained government budgets, scaling up these interventions should be a no-brainer.

Globally, countries that have systems in place to support individuals and families before a crisis strikes can better protect their citizens during the crisis. A new World Bank study, "Collapse and Recovery: How COVID Eroded Human Capital and What to Do About It," which analyses the pandemic's impacts on young people, stresses the multi-dimensional and complementary nature of human development. The health, education, and skills people acquire at various stages of their lives build and depend on each other. To be effective, human development systems must recognise and exploit these overlapping connections. In other words, they should be agile, resilient, and adaptive.

Such systems will help countries better respond to future shocks as well. Crises are unpredictable and often present rapidly changing circumstances. A well-functioning system is one that can spring into action the moment a shock strikes, ensure that essential services such as healthcare and learning remain uninterrupted, and have the flexibility to evolve as needs change (such as social protection systems that ramp up to meet urgent needs). Since services are provided by different individual sectors, human development systems must be able to coordinate efficiently across sectors. Lastly, as data and technology play a crucial role in the delivery of services, human development systems should ensure they are effectively used.

The road ahead for South Asia is rocky. The next crisis may be just around the corner. A robust human development system would not only mitigate the damage, but also help ensure lives and livelihoods are protected. It could provide the resilience South Asia needs to prosper in an increasingly volatile world.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Inspector General
Bangladesh Police
Police Headquarters, Dhaka

Invitation for International Re-Tender

Memo No. 44.01.0000.058.07.142.22/329 Date: 25/02/2023

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from the Manufacturers/ suppliers in their official pad for supply of following items as required by Bangladesh Police in FY 2022-2023.

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Home Affairs.
2	Agency	Bangladesh Police.
3	Procuring entity name	AIG (Arms & Ammunition), Bangladesh Police.
4	Invitation for	To purchase Polycarbonate Riot Shield for Bangladesh Police.
5	Incitation Ref. No.	44.01.0000.058.07.142.22/23 (2022-2023)
6	Date	25/02/2023
KEY INFORMATION		
7	Procurement method	One Stage Two Envelope (International Re-Tender).
FUNDING INFORMATION		
8	Budget and source of funds	Revenue Budget (GOB).
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
9	Tender publication date	26 February 2023
10	Tender last selling date	27 March 2023
11	Tender closing date and time	28 March 2023 at 12:00 hrs
12	Tender opening date and time (Technical offer only)	28 March 2023 at 12:30 hrs
NAME & ADDRESS OF THE OFFICE		
13	Name & address of the office	Bangladesh Police, Police Headquarters, 6, Phoenix Road, Fulbaria, Dhaka.
	Selling tender document	AIG (Arms & Ammunition), Bangladesh Police, Police Headquarters, Dhaka.
	Receiving tender document	AIG (Arms & Ammunition), Bangladesh Police, Police Headquarters, Dhaka.
	Opening tender document	NCCOM Building (Mini Conference Room 5th Floor), Bangladesh Police, Police Headquarters, Dhaka.
14	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional)	05 March 2023, at 11:00 hrs. NCCOM Building (Mini Conference Room 5th Floor), Bangladesh Police, Police Headquarters, Dhaka.
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER		
15	Eligibility of tenderer	1) Up-to-date export license 2) Written confirmation authorizing the signatory of the tender in accordance with the Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association of the Principal 3) Affidavit confirming the legal capacity and financial capability 4) Original full brochure of products of the principal 5) Other requirements described in the standard tender document (PG 5A).
16	Brief description of goods.	

Sl No.	Description of goods	Quantity	Price of tender document (non-refundable)	Tender security in (USD)	Completion time
1.	Polycarbonate Riot Shield	10,000 Pcs	5,000/-	14,000.00	120 days from LC opening date

PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS		
17	Name of official inviting tender	Md. Moniruzzman.
18	Designation of the official inciting tender	Assistant Inspector General (Arms & Ammunition).
19	Address of official inviting tender	Assistant Inspector General (Arms & Ammunition), Room No. 306 (2nd Floor), 6, Phoenix Road, Police Headquarters, Dhaka.
20	Contact details of official inviting the tender	Phone: 02-47120270, Fax: 02-55101641 E-mail: aigarmsbd@gmail.com & aiga_a@police.gov.bd
21	The tenderers shall submit their Technical and Financial offer in separate sealed envelope. Furthermore both envelopes shall be covered by an outer envelope which is sealed.	
Special instructions		
22	a) No tender will be received after the deadline of submission time & date.	
	b) The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender process without assigning any reason.	
	c) The procuring entity also reserves the right to omit, increase and/or decrease the quantity of any item(s) of the tender.	
	d) If not possible to receive/open the tender on the scheduled date for any unavoidable circumstance, the same will be received/opened on the next working date at the same time & same venue.	
	e) Evaluation will be on item by item basis.	
	f) Date of financial offer opening will be duly informed to the Technically Responsive Tenderers and their local agents.	
	g) The tenderer must comply with all requirements as the tender data sheet provided with the tender schedule.	
	h) The Tender Security shall be in the form of an irrevocable bank guarantee issued by an internationally reputable bank and shall require to be endorsed by its any correspondent bank located in Bangladesh.	
	i) The procurement will be performed according to the Public Procurement Act-2006 and Public Procurement Regulation 2008.	

25.02.23
Md. Moniruzzaman
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