

VISUAL: REHNUMA PROSHOON

## How lack of awareness deprives persons with disabilities

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In Bangladesh, there are several inclusive laws and policies to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities. According to the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013, all persons with disabilities should be identified and provided with a unique identification (ID) card. This card is called the Suborno Nagorik card, wherein "Suborno Nagorik" means "Golden Citizen." The card is a precondition to be eligible for other rights of persons with disabilities, such as receiving a disability allowance. However, there are several challenges in the process of identification and provision of Suborno Nagorik cards. In the Brac Institute of Governance and Development's (BIGD) ongoing study with the University of Cambridge on inclusive education, the researchers have gathered some insights about these issues, from the field.

Discussions with parents of children with disabilities reveal that the strategic naming of the card boosted their confidence. This name acts as a kind of rebuttal to the stigma that exists in Bangladeshi society against persons with disabilities. Some parents, whose children are card-holders, said they were able to claim their children's rights with strong voices at hospitals, schools, and government service centres, thanks to this empowering name.

Unfortunately, this is not the whole picture. Although the more aware parents are able to avail their children's rights, most other parents are uninformed about the Suborno Nagorik card's benefits even if their children do have it. The situation in rural areas was found to be worse. While some parents of children with disabilities in urban areas at least know of such a card, their rural counterparts are clueless about its existence.

A major impediment to the identification of persons with disabilities is their lack of knowledge, and that of their caregivers, about the Suborno Nagorik card. As found

in our study, in most cases, the parents who knew about this card did not know how to obtain it. And the parents who had obtained the card for their children had depended on a local spokesperson, a member of the local government, a middleman or a computer operator to go through the process. Due to this asymmetry of awareness, some parents end up paying substantial amounts of money to the middlemen, believing it to be a requirement. In some cases, parents pay the middlemen because they presume that the process of

called in for a medical examination to assess the type and severity of their disability. When the card is ready, applicants are informed via SMS. However, since very few persons with disabilities or their caregivers know about this process, the popular practice has gained prominence. In this, local elected representatives (such as ward councillors) take the responsibility of listing down the persons with disabilities in their area. Often, the medical examination step of the process is bypassed. Therefore, getting a place on the list becomes dependent on whether the officials or elected representatives in question perceive an applicant to be a person with disability.

In the study, researchers found that some children had the cards but did not have any disabilities according to the 2013 law. To put this into perspective, a person missing a small toe faces no difficulty in their everyday life and is not a person with a disability by law. Yet, they could still have a Suborno Nagorik card. If such individuals are listed as persons with disabilities, they will have access to the limited resources that could otherwise be given to someone with a legitimate disability. Many kinds of disabilities, such as those concerning learning abilities, are not readily visible. Hence, persons with such disabilities remain excluded from the benefits that come with the card.

These issues highlight the need for more information to be disseminated on all sides. While persons with disabilities and their caregivers must be given more information about the Suborno Nagorik card, local elected leaders and relevant government officials need to be trained on what counts as a disability.

Given the limited number of medical professionals in Bangladesh, it is understandable that a medical examination might not always be possible. However, a simple day-long training session on the definitions and symptoms of different kinds of disabilities would help our local officials to better identify persons with disabilities. Similarly, an effective way of reaching out to persons with disabilities with information about the Suborno Nagorik card could be to train schoolteachers or other grassroots government employees, such as midwives. The issue of erroneous listing of persons with disabilities cannot be solved simply with a large budget. What we need are leaders, caregivers, and persons with disabilities who are properly trained about the rights and concepts surrounding disabilities in the country.

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acquiring the Suborno Nagorik card must be too complicated for them to complete on their own. During the study, many stated ambiguous amounts of money that they had paid to middlemen – from something like Tk 3,000 a year to Tk 1,000 over six months. Furthermore, some parents are also unsure of the benefits that their children would be eligible for after obtaining the card. They also do not know whom to contact if they do not receive those benefits.

The popular process of identifying persons with disabilities for the provision of a Suborno Nagorik card is quite different from the official process. It is also somewhat dependent on the perception of disability that is held by local elected representatives and other relevant officials. The official process requires a form to be filled out and submitted to the upazila social welfare office. The applicants are then

## Quenching the hidden thirst of AI

### An urgent call for environmentally sustainable computation

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In recent years, the promise of artificial intelligence (AI) has fascinated technologists and the general public alike. The potential to learn, predict, and simulate through machine learning, especially large language models like GPT-3, is indeed captivating. However, these digital marvels come with a hidden cost: water.

Yes, you read that correctly. Our AI companions are water guzzlers.

Using a tool like ChatGPT can be as refreshing as a dip in a pool on a hot day, especially when it provides a customised line of code you have been seeking for hours. But just as you might be surprised to find that the pool had to be refilled after your swim, you might also be astonished to discover that a 15-minute conversation with your AI pal has potentially consumed about half a litre of freshwater.

At first, this might seem counterintuitive. Why would AI, a purely digital entity, need water? As revealed in a recent research paper titled "Making AI Less 'Thirsty': Uncovering and Addressing the Secret Water Footprint of AI Models," by Li et al., it turns out that tech firms utilise vast amounts of water for AI training and running inferences on their massive computational farms.

The intense computation required for AI training produces significant heat, and to dissipate this heat, firms use cooling towers where water is evaporated. This process, consequently, is how AI guzzles up water – freshwater, to be precise.

The paper estimates that training a model like GPT-3 in Microsoft's state-of-the-art US data centres could directly consume 700,000 litres of clean freshwater. If the training occurred in Microsoft's Asian data centres, this consumption would triple.

Even more staggering are the water implications of AI usage. For example, in June 2023, an estimated 1.6 billion user visits were recorded on ChatGPT. If every interaction consumes half a litre of water, we are looking at hundreds of millions of litres of freshwater used every month just to power our digital conversations.

As AI becomes woven into more apps and devices, this usage and consequent water consumption is set to rise dramatically. Soon, AI-powered banking interactions, website interfaces, e-commerce, and even mundane household tasks will be commonplace. As a result, water

consumption will rise in tandem, putting more strain on our already limited freshwater resources.

Addressing this mounting water crisis requires a multifaceted approach. The authors of the study propose that tech firms could alter their training times to periods of lower heat, thus reducing water demand. However, this might conflict with carbon reduction efforts, as solar power is most readily available during the hottest part of the day.

In this situation, civic and public pressure can play a crucial role. By implementing appropriate water pricing strategies, cities and states can incentivise tech firms to reduce their water consumption. Indeed, much like energy efficiency improvements at data centres over the past decade, increased attention and pressure could induce radical

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improvements in water usage efficiency as well.

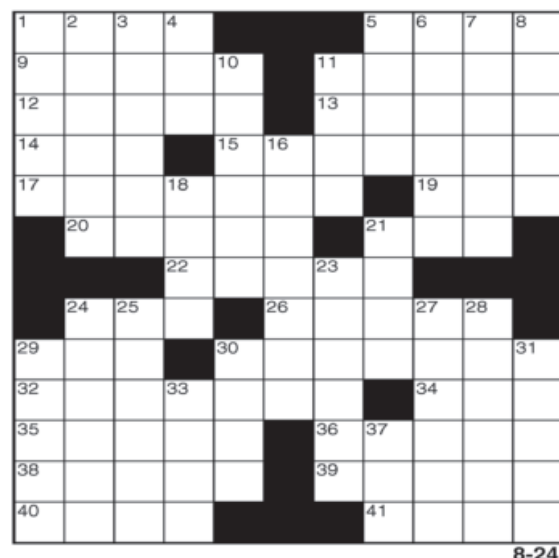
There's no silver bullet solution here; the problem is as intricate as it is urgent. Tech firms, who have pledged to become "water positive" by 2030, are looking into strategies such as rainwater collection and "adiabatic cooling" that uses air instead of water. But even with these interventions, the predicted savings are dwarfed by the scale of water consumption by AI models.

However, this progress would only be a drop in the bucket compared to the broader challenge of water scarcity. AI's water footprint may be the tip of the iceberg, but it is an indicator of a larger, looming crisis. As our digital thirst grows, we need to ensure it doesn't leave us high and dry in the real world. It is time for all stakeholders – tech companies, governments and consumers – to address the hidden water costs of our digital companions and move towards truly sustainable AI.

## CROSSWORD

BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Takes advantage of
  - 5 Baby bull
  - 9 Hot poster
  - 11 Adorable one
  - 12 Comic Bruce
  - 13 Sports spot
  - 14 Hot blood
  - 15 Clothes, in slang
  - 17 Threw away
  - 19 Harden
  - 20 Impromptu
  - 21 Wallet bill
  - 22 Egyptian crosses
  - 24 Bit of humor
  - 26 Minimal amount
  - 29 Member of the force
  - 30 Storages
- DOWN**
- 1 Bathed from below
  - 2 Rugged range
  - 3 Group of nine
  - 4 Day light
  - 5 Make sound
  - 6 Not nervous
  - 7 Basswood tree
  - 8 Big meal
  - 10 Large snake
  - 11 King or queen
  - 16 Jeers from the audience
  - 18 Carpet type
  - 21 Nicholas II, for one
  - 23 Intensity
  - 24 Player in a mask
  - 25 Kitchen coverings
  - 27 Rank indicator
  - 28 Namely
  - 29 Monk's music
  - 30 Stand up to
  - 31 Refine ore
  - 33 Warning word
  - 37 Gist



### SUNDAY'S ANSWERS

D E F I E D P E E L  
 O R A N G E A L T O  
 S A N D Y K O U F A X  
 O P E N S  
 S C O T T E S T  
 P O O R P A S T O R  
 I L L G A P R I O  
 T O O B A D C U L T  
 S N O B O A T S  
 A L A R M  
 W A R R E N S P A H N  
 A C I D T O U P E E  
 R E D S I N S E R T



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Ref: 27.28.8878.301.07.001.20.114

Date: 14/08/2023

### e-Tender Notice

The following e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)):

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Brief Description of Tender	Publication Date & Time	Last Selling Date & Time	Opening Date & Time
1	858846	Procurement of EDI cells.	14/08/2023, 12:30 PM	05/09/2023, 12:30 PM	05/09/2023, 2:30 PM
2	858845	Procurement of Spares for GT and ST EOT Crane	14/08/2023, 12:30 PM	05/09/2023, 12:30 PM	05/09/2023, 2:30 PM

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP Help Desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

*(Signature)*  
14.08.2023  
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