

World Literacy Day

To be illiterate in today's world is to be kept in chains for if the mind is chained the body is also. To be illiterate due to forces and circumstances beyond one's control is to be the victim of a crime against humanity. For the right to literacy is a birthright that cannot be denied and is written into the constitution. Yet even today, so many years after independence, a quarter of our primary-age children are not in school and more than half our adults cannot read and write.

That the eradication of illiteracy was not to be easy should have been recognised from the beginning. Yet we went on deluding ourselves, with the result that increased numbers have made the task infinitely more difficult. This is more poignant as the rate of literacy attained so far falls far short of the level we need to propel us into the 21st century. Therefore, on this important day we must take a fresh look at the literacy programmes being sponsored or partially-sponsored or supported by the government and assess their usefulness.

Of them all the Integrated Non-Formal Education Project (INFEP) appears to be the most successful with a success rate of imparting literacy to 2.5 million. Yet the fact remains that the major portion of the nation is still living outside the world that springs to life through the deciphering of words. Unfortunately given the economic state of the country, we do not have time to wait for evaluating moves because our need for a literate nation is here and now. If we cannot achieve this we shall be pushed out of world markets by the competition.

If there were ever a time when the jungle law was supreme and only the fittest survived it is now—and a part of that "fitness" is to have a literate nation. Apart from the value of education to a nation there is also a personal value on which it is impossible to put a price. For no person can progress if his choices are limited by illiteracy.

With around 44,000 centres catering to 1.42 million people under the programme run in collaboration with local Thana Administrations by the NGOs, it is pleasing to see that there has been some progress—but we must remember literacy programmes must not end with a person being able to only sign their names and must be an on-going process where they can really read and write. Therefore there has to be provision for "continuing education" for people's retention of lessons learned is fragile at best and has to be reinforced continuously if learning has to be made a permanent acquisition. Failure to understand this will have far reaching consequences for the nation and will widen the gap between the privileged and the masses.

Although the real test of their success will come later when their performance is assessed we must remain mindful of the fact that no nation can progress if its people are illiterate. In other words, the nation will not forgive us if we ignore the needs of the majority and we shall go down in history as a nation that failed to live up to its promises. The outworn excuse of insufficient resources no longer holds water for countries which were as poor as us after channelling all their resources into education are the ones that have gone ahead and now have almost 100 per cent literacy.

This means we must mobilise all our resources and concentrate first on educating the masses if we expect to get anywhere. The first step toward achieving full literacy is the re-organisation of education—therefore as we observe World Literacy Day, once more we must commit ourselves anew to

তারিখ SER © 8 1999

পৃষ্ঠা

১৩

১৩

It is learnt that a passenger bus was travelling from Dhamrai to Dhaka-Metro-ba-11-0197 was stopped by the police at the border of the river Naff on charges of trafficking various documents to Myanmar. The bus was found to be carrying documents to Myanmar. The bus was found to be carrying documents to Myanmar. The bus was found to be carrying documents to Myanmar.