

Literacy and

A great paradox of the present day world is the contradiction between the immense strides made by man in the conquest of nature and his failings in solving many down-to-earth social problems. One of these glaring failings is certainly in the sphere of educational opportunities for women in the developing countries.

When we refer to 'developing countries' we really are talking about three-fourths of the countries of the world and at least two-thirds of the human population. It is hard to believe that when man has acquired such sophisticated means to exploit the material resources of this planet nearly 50 per cent of the adult population of the developing countries today remain totally illiterate. Even such a dramatic statistic bodes the extreme cases of many countries where the overall literacy rate is less than 10 per cent and the man-woman differential in the literacy scenario is as high

great disparity in the physical facilities available and quality of life in the urban and rural sectors in all developing countries. Although the rate of urbanisation is generally low, the affluent among the rural population generally tend to flock to the urban centres which provide much better conditions of living. This deprives the rural areas of both the male and female educated sections.

The hardships of rural living do not even attract women to teach in primary schools in the rural areas. The Government of Bangladesh has for the last few years, been making concerted efforts to recruit more women as primary school teachers. This has resulted in a doubling of the proportion of women among this group during the last decade. The present figure of about 9 per cent is still low and certainly a lot needs to be done to raise this proportion further. But experience shows that most women teachers of primary schools are being located in the urban centres and owing to various physical constraint, only a small fraction is venturing to join schools in the rural areas.

Social taboo is another powerful impediment to the spread of women's education. Women in the rural areas do not have as much freedom of movement as their male counterparts. The same applies to girls, particularly when they approach puberty. Coeducation, except for tiny tots, is frowned upon in most places and a girl's education in the rural areas hardly progresses beyond the primary stage.

In Bangladesh the proportion of girls comes down from 37 per cent of all pupils enrolled at the primary stage to 21 per cent at the secondary stage. It hardly needs mention that a substantial portion of the girls enrolled in schools are in the urban centres. In the rural areas many parents not only do not see the need for the education of girls, they even perceive such education as detrimental to 'harmonious family life' since they feel that educated girls would most likely not be adequately submissive to their parents, husband or in-laws.

Economic factors weigh heavily on such high level of sex discrimination in the provision of educational facilities. In the context of Bangladesh, landlessness and pauperisation in the rural sector is increasing at an alarming rate. With hardly any means of production with a technological content available to the poor vil-



President H. M. Ershad is seen with the settlers at Bhushan Chhora at Bangamati on Tuesday. Photo PID.

Reorganisation

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Panishwar south under Sarail upazila, (b) Talsibar west (c) Araisida north (d) Araisida south (e) Saridpur east and (f) Saridpur west under Brahmanbaria upazila.

The delimitation commission would consider the proposal for upgradation of the new Ashuganj police station into upazila and submit its recommendation to the government.

The meeting decided to empower, the Ministry of Works for spending Tk. 25 lakh for land acquisition in Narayanganj district out of the grant for the creation of infrastructural facilities. Allocations of Tk. 25 lakh, so spent, would be made available out of the savings of the block director for development of infrastruc-

Prof. Md. Shamsul Huq, Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University was present as chief guest.

Presided over by Mr. Lutfar Rahman Sarkar, Managing Director of Sonali Bank, the function was attended by Dr. Khorshed Ali, Director of Student Counselling and Guidance Centre and Prof. Nasiruddin of Finance Department, both co-ordinators of the programme.

The Vice-Chancellor asked the students to uphold the good image of student community by working with devotion, sincerity and honesty.

Prof. Huq maintained that the success of the students in their work would create more job opportunities for more students.

He thanked the Sonali Bank saying this programme would alleviate the economic problems of the students.

Mr. Sarkar said the programme was taken by the Bank to discharge its social responsibilities.

He urged other organisations of the country to come forward to provide the students with part-time jobs for the greater interest of the country.

The students will work in different branches of Sonali Bank with a daily remuneration of Taka 50. --BSS