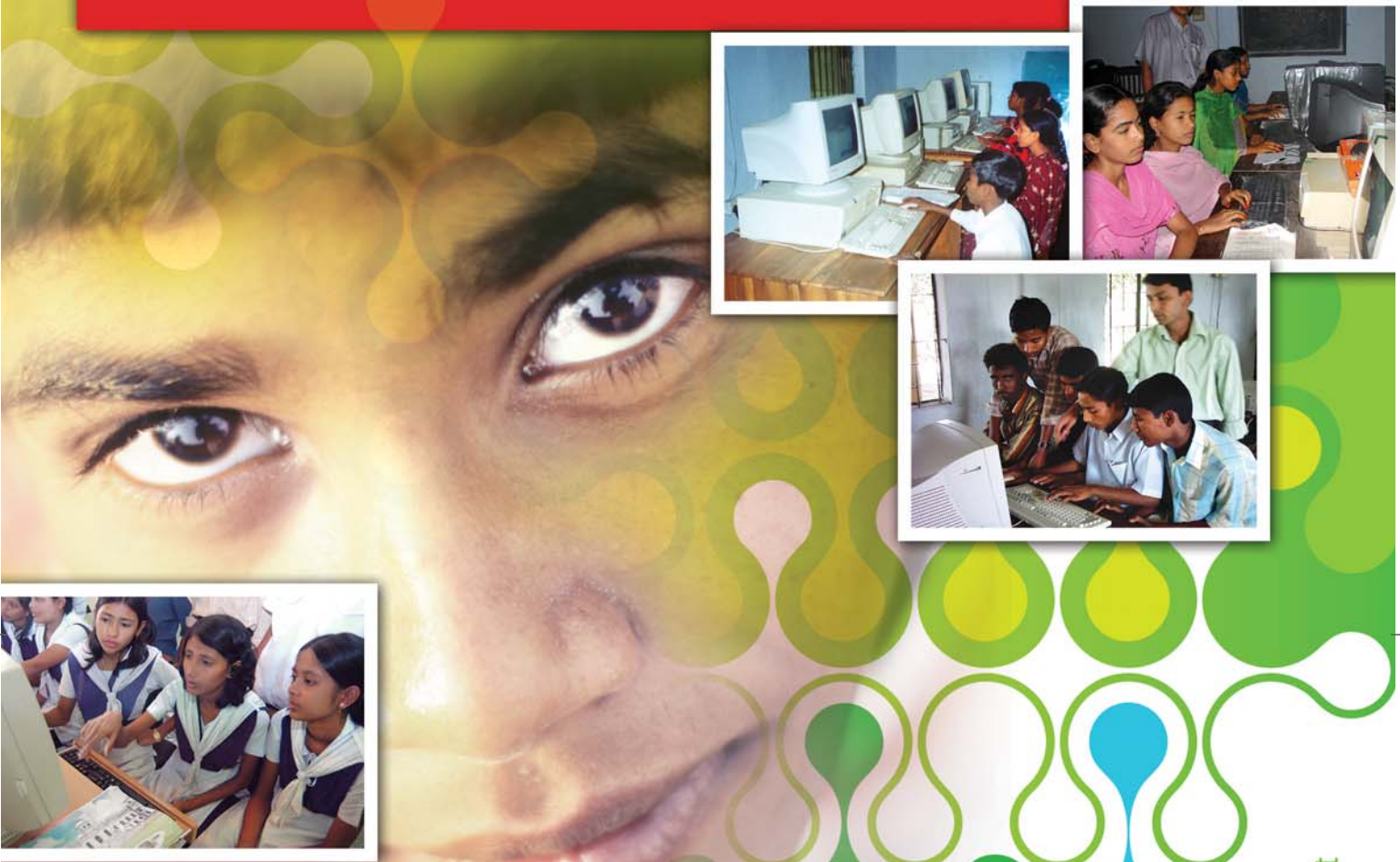


# COMPUTER LITERACY PROGRAM

EMPOWERING UNDERPRIVILEGED YOUTHS IN BANGLADESH  
THROUGH COMPUTER LITERACY



CLP FOR DIGITAL BANGLADESH

July 18 | 2009 Fundraising Event



VOLUNTEERS ASSOCIATION FOR BANGLADESH - NEW JERSEY (VAB-NJ)  
[www.vabonline.org/vabnj](http://www.vabonline.org/vabnj)

## Program Schedule

*VAB-CLP Fundraising Dinner Evening*

*Saturday, July 18, 2009*

*Rutgers Cook Campus Center, 59 Biel Road, New Brunswick, NJ 08901*

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**5:30 – 6:00 Guest Arrival, Registration, Snacks, Networking**

**6:00 – 7:05 Introduction and Guest Speeches**

6:00 – 6:05 National Anthems, USA & Bangladesh

6:05 – 6:15 Welcome and Introduction

6:15 – 7:05 Guest Speakers:

- Assembly Woman Linda Greenstein
- Nextgen VAB reps. - Parveen Sikder/BSA
- Bangladesh Ambassador Humayun Kabir

**7:10- 8:20 Panel Discussion: *CLP for Digital Bangladesh***

**Moderator:** Moslehuddin Ahmed

**Panelists:** Aziz Ahmed, Toufiq Ali , Santanu Das, and M. Farooque

**(8:00 - 8:45 Children Dinner in Merle V Adams Room)**

**8:25– 8:40 Khan Foundation Acknowledgements**

Speech by Mrs. Sitara Khan

**8:45 – 9:00 High School Graduates' Appreciation**

**9:00 – 9:45 Dinner**

**9:50 – 9:55 Vote of Thanks**

**10:00 – 11:20 Cultural Program**

Performance by Entertainer Tajul Islam and Others.

**11:20 Conclusion**



*Tajul Islam's singing lessons started at home from his elder sister Ruksana Chowdhury, an accomplished singer herself. Subsequently, Tajul took formal lessons from Mihir Nandi at Alauddin Lolitkala Kendra. He also studied under Wahidul Haque, Sheila Momen and Shamsur Rahman. A proud freedom fighter, Tajul enrolled in Chittagong Art College after liberation. Inspired by artist/teacher Mr. Sabih ul Alam and Baul Purna Chandra Das he began his pursuit of collecting, archiving and promoting proverbial folk songs including Baul, Marfoti, Murshidi and Kobigan. As a professional singer Tajul toured India, Malaysia, Singapore, Great Britain, United State and Canada. He has earned many awards including the leading singer award in Rotaract International Academy.*



*“It is indeed a great pleasure to learn that a group of non-resident Bangladeshis working within the Volunteers Association for Bangladesh (VAB), New Jersey Chapter, have devoted so much time and energy to empower underprivileged youths in Bangladesh through computer literacy. It is heartening to see that within a span of five years they have established 107 fully functional Computer Literacy Center in rural Bangladesh. I have seen some of these centers in action and find these highly useful initiatives. I wish them accelerating success in their endeavor and a great a fund-raising night on the 18th of July 2009.”*



**Dr. Atiur Raman, Governor, Bangladesh Bank**



*“It is my privilege to congratulate and commend the efforts of the Volunteers Association for Bangladesh, New Jersey Chapter (VAB-NJ) for its worthwhile efforts in support of the Computer Literacy Program to benefit Bangladesh youths in need, through promoting computer and internet usage, providing quality education via this tool, thus, equipping them with technology literacy for future success.”*

**New Jersey Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein**



# Computer Literacy Program

Volunteers Association for Bangladesh - New Jersey Chapter (VAB-NJ)



On May 30, 2009 The Volunteers Association for Bangladesh – New Jersey Chapter (VAB-NJ) and D.Net established the 100th Computer Literacy Center (CLC) at the K G H F Moukhiakj United Academy in Pikegacha upazilla of Khulna district. A few years ago, this milestone was a distant dream. It is a pleasure to report to you that with your support and encouragement the Computer Literacy Program (CLP) has crossed this important milestone. By the end of June 2009, one hundred and seven (107) Computer Literacy Centers (CLCs) are fully operational in 70 upazillas in 39 districts of Bangladesh. Each CLC is run by 2 CLP-trained teachers and is equipped with at least 4 computers, a printer, and other ancillary equipment. To date CLP has trained 252 teachers who in turn taught over 18,000 students. A textbook in Bangla for students, and instruction manuals for teachers have been developed.

An important highlight of the program this year is providing Internet connection to a total of 50 CLCs. Relief International, a non-government organization working towards dissemination of information through the Internet provided funds for Internet connection to 20 of these CLCs. This is an important step forward to digitally connect the underprivileged youth of rural Bangladesh to the world of information and knowledge.

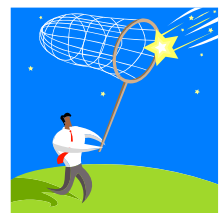
Another highlight of 2009 has been implementation of the “Computer Teaches Everyday English” (CTEE) at 5 CLCS on a pilot basis. The first of a planned set of CDs aimed at enhancing English comprehension and conversation skills has already been developed with inputs from educationists, students and teachers. In developing the CD, care was taken to ensure that the content be relevant and familiar to students in rural Bangladesh, be interesting and age appropriate for the intended students, and yet be powerful enough that upon completion of the entire program, the students should be well on their way in understanding and using English in the conversational mode. Better comprehension and usage of English, in turn, will equip them to derive more benefit from the Internet and information technology since contents are dominantly in English.

CLP continues to attract support from within Bangladesh and Labroad (expatriates). More than 50% of the CLCs established in 2008 were funded from Bangladesh sources. In 2009, the North American Bangladeshi Islamic Community (NABIC) has funded the establishment of 10 new CLCs. Our past sponsors and donors have continued their support and it is because of that we have been able to continue servicing the older CLCs years beyond our commitment.

While CLP is making a difference, much more remains to be done. Given that there are some 65,000 villages in Bangladesh, 107 CLCs are simply inadequate for the need. More CLCs, advanced training, more hands-on time and opportunity for graduates to practice are sorely needed. CLP needs your sustained support for sustenance and continued growth.

We thank you sincerely for your generous donations. We dream to build a knowledge-based society in Bangladesh.

**Come, and dream with us.**

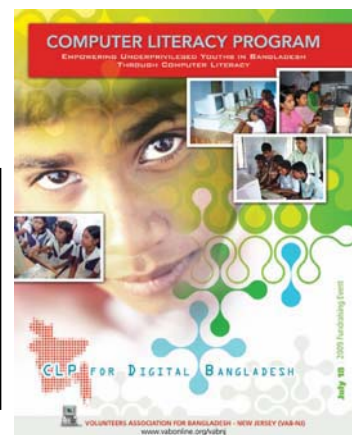


*From virtual to real, through computers to prosperity, we will empower the underprivileged youths of Bangladesh to enter the realm of hope by crossing the digital divide*

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*VABNJ recognizes the contribution by Mr. Ashraful Haque in designing the cover of this magazine.*



## Computer Literacy Program: A Step towards a Digital Bangladesh

*Dr. Swapan Kumar Gayen*

### ***Digital Bangladesh***

“Digital Bangladesh” and “Vision 2021” are catch phrases in Bangladesh these days. The buzzwords are no longer confined in the lexicon of information and communication technology (ICT) enthusiasts, but have made entry into the vocabulary of the educated section of the population. In its election manifesto leading to the Ninth Parliamentary Elections in 2008, the Awami League coalition floated the vision of a Digital Bangladesh by 2021. The alliance led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party countered with a promise for even earlier delivery. ICT activists in the country may find this competition to own the issue heartening, as it may be a reflection of the realization among the politicians that digitization is synonymous with being modern and forward-looking, and that investment in ICT is important for national development.

The creation, dissemination, exchange and application of knowledge play an increasingly important role in the economic development of the “knowledge-based society” that the world is embarking upon. It is imperative that Bangladesh positions herself well to avail that rising tide to become a member of the group known as the “emerging economies.” The pursuit of a digital Bangladesh by 2021, the golden anniversary of the nation’s independence, to achieve that end is a coveted endeavor.

What is the scope of Digital Bangladesh? What are its mission and goals? Is there a roadmap to achieve the desired end? Activists and enthusiasts who like to go beyond rhetoric and look for concrete plans of action are raising these questions from different pulpits and platforms. Answers to these questions are yet to be articulated, and as one waits for those to take shape, expectations build, demands grow, and interest groups come up with their own interpretations and agendas. While the scope of Digital Bangladesh is likely to evolve, being shaped by the economic, political, social and cultural realities, there will be some common threads that reasonable people can agree upon. It will entail applications of ICT to enhance efficiency of operation, administration, management, and governance. In a Digital Bangladesh:

- *Educational institutions* will be connected to the world wide web of knowledge and communication networks enabling open exchange of ideas and information.
- *Health-care institutions* (medical colleges and hospitals in big and small cities, diagnostic laboratories, hospitals and clinics in rural areas) and *health-care providers* (doctors, nurses, medical technicians, paramedics) will be connected to one another and to patients everywhere including remote locations; information on hygiene, safe health practices, disease prevention, spread of diseases, and health alerts will be easily available.
- *Governance* will be made efficient and transparent through the use of ICT, the government officials will be able to communicate with and provide services to citizens promptly and effectively.
- *Industrial concerns* will use ICT for promoting and marketing their products, managing communications between management and workforce, and democratizing the decision making process.

- *Agriculture sector* will be brought under digital management so that seeds, fertilizers and other enabling commodities are readily accessible to farmers, and relevant alerts, information, and know-how can be promptly communicated.
- Overall *land administration* that includes *land survey, land records, and land management* will be integrated and pertinent records and information digitized.
- A robust industry to develop cutting-edge *software* and *hardware* products will flourish and *ICT trained manpower* will be a national resource; and
- An *information and communication highway system* will make the benefits and services of ICT sector available everywhere in the country.

Realization of Digital Bangladesh is a formidable challenge that will require concerted efforts of the Government, private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and mobilization of resources and expertise on a national scale. Non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) can play a supportive role. Many of them are employed in the ICT field and can share their valuable technical expertise, and contribute funds to help implementation of relevant projects.

It is encouraging that the allocation for the ICT and telecommunication sector almost doubled to \$82M in the proposed budget for the 2009-2010 fiscal year compared to that for the previous year. It includes targeted allocations of \$15M for ICT development, \$30M for the Equity and Entrepreneurship fund for ICT promotion, and \$20M for an annual development program for the Science and ICT ministry. While unveiling a nationwide ICT strategy, the finance minister announced that digital management will be introduced in the sectors of education, health, and land administration. The minister further mentioned 2012 and 2014 as target time frames for introduction of e-commerce and e-governance.

The process of transforming Bangladesh to a “digital” country will be complex. Many administrative, strategic, management-related, and even socio-economic issues have to be addressed and resolved along the way. Two core issues are manpower development and democratization. A competent workforce with the requisite technical expertise, as well as, communication and management skills will be necessary, not only in the big cities but throughout the country including rural areas. This in turn will require supreme emphasis on education in general, and strengthening of the science, technology, engineering, mathematics, communication and management education, in particular. In order for a “Digital Bangladesh” to be meaningful for all her citizens, the benefits of digitization should reach the disadvantaged everywhere in the country, and not be limited to elite few. Anything less will have the undesirable effect of widening the “digital divide” and accentuating the disparities between the privileged and the underprivileged.

### ***Visiting a rural Computer Literacy Center***

Flash back to a trip we took to visit a computer literacy center (CLC) on a hot and humid day of July 2008. Our trip originated in Dhaka early in the morning. Our destination was Kadambari High School at Kadambari, a village in the low lands of Rajair upazila in the district of Madaripur. Nearby significant business and governmental activity centers are Gopalganj and Tekerhat. In the not-too-distant past one had to access Kadambari by boat during the rainy season and on foot during the rest of the year. Thanks to recent developments in roads and highways, our van could be parked by the roadside near the school in the early afternoon.

The main structure in the school is a small brick building in need of substantial repair work, a sharp contrast with some of the high school buildings that I saw in Dhaka and Gopalganj. The ripples of green set up in the vast fields surrounding the school building by intermittent gentle bursts of wind was soothing and welcoming. The classes were not in session as the students prepared for an upcoming examination. The headmaster, members of the teaching and support staff, and some members of the school board greeted us. One of the computer teachers trained by the Computer Literacy Program (CLP) made special arrangements to take time off from a training session to meet with us. We spent some time talking about students, concerns that are specific to the school, and issues that the secondary schools face in rural Bangladesh. What I found most striking was that the rural high schools had a paucity of qualified teachers to teach advanced mathematics, that it was hard to find teachers who took mathematics at the Bachelor's level. Fortunately, Kadambari High School had two good mathematics and science teachers. A paradigm shift that I became aware of was that commerce was attracting brighter students more than the science and humanities these days, while science was in vogue when I was a student.

We then took a tour of the computer lab, a room with four working computers, a printer, relevant accessories, desk space and seats for students. The entrance to the room had the plaque identifying the CLC prominently displayed. Even though the classes were not in session, some students were working on those computers. The computer teacher told us that the students eagerly wait for their turn, as each batch can only accommodate eight students. The school even attracts more students compared to neighboring schools since the establishment of the CLC there. We found the students to be confident in what they were doing. They demonstrated their familiarity with the physical parts of the computer and skills in using Microsoft Word, Excel, and Paint programs. The teachers pointed out that some students are real enthusiasts and tend to go beyond what is in the training program. I remembered that the students from this CLC did very well in a quiz competition set up by D. Net. One student even dedicated a poem to the computer, which was published in the newsletter that D. Net started for CLC students.

We took a tour of the science lab, a small room that the school could afford for students to carry out physics, chemistry, and biology experiments. That the school allocated a room for the computer lab when the infrastructure was that inadequate was a testimony to their interest in computer literacy. The headmaster mentioned that the school received a gift of five computers in addition to the 4 provided by the CLP, but needed space and resources to set those up. The school had consistent good records in the district for its students doing well in the Secondary School Certificate examination. I found it heartening how much students and educators could do even with a small infusion of targeted resources.

### ***More Computer Literacy Centers***

The computer literacy center at Kadambari High School is one of the early CLCs established under the auspices of the Computer Literacy Program. A group of expatriate Bangladeshis living in New Jersey initiated the program in 2004, organized as the New Jersey chapter of the Volunteers Association for Bangladesh (VAB-NJ) and enlisted the help of D. Net to implement the goals of the program in Bangladesh. The mission of CLP is to empower the underprivileged youths in Bangladesh through computer and internet literacy. The Volunteers Association for Bangladesh (VAB, [www.vabonline.org](http://www.vabonline.org)) is devoted to helping the underprivileged youth with quality education and training through scholarships, science laboratories, library books and



teachers training. D.Net ([www.dnet-bangladesh.org](http://www.dnet-bangladesh.org)) is a pioneer non-government organization devoted to spreading of information technology in Bangladesh, particularly in the rural areas.

The principal objective of the program is to establish CLCs in selected educational or social institutions in rural Bangladesh. Every CLC has a computer lab equipped with a minimum of four computers, one printer, other accessories and requisite furniture. Two teachers from each CLC receive two weeks of intensive computer and internet training from D.Net professionals in Dhaka. The teachers are also provided with a complete “Teacher’s Manual” so that upon their return they can teach the students. At each CLC, students in a batch of 8 to 10 receive hands-on training free of charge for two hours a day, twice a week for eight weeks. The content includes knowledge of the physical parts of the computer, fundamental usage, Microsoft Word, Excel spreadsheet, and Paint programs. Each student is provided with a copy of the specially developed student’s manual, “*Esho Computer Shikhi*” at a nominal cost. Since the teachers provide the computer instructions in addition to their regular duties, each teacher and a teacher’s assistant (commonly a student who successfully completed the training) receive honorariums of Tk 1000 and Tk 200, respectively, after training a batch of students.

The joint efforts of VAB-NJ, D.Net, and local school management run the program. VAB-NJ provides the conceptual framework, the implementation directives, computers, teachers’ honorarium, and funds for project implementation. D.Net assists in selecting the host institution, the production of the manuals and curriculum, teacher training, physical establishment of the computer lab, technical oversight to keep the computers operational, monitoring the progress of each CLC and overall management of the program. The school management and local residents provide the room, furniture, electricity as well as encouragement to the teachers and students.

The CLP efforts, though modest in the context of the overall needs, have made important contributions over the past five years as the following highlights of achievements will indicate.

- As of the end of June 2009, the CLP has established 107 CLCs primarily in selected rural educational institutions in 39 districts of Bangladesh. Internet connection has been provided to 50 of these institutions.
- Out of a total of 18,913 enrolled students 18,404 successfully completed the program as of April, 2009. Almost 50% of these are female students.
- To date 252 teachers have been trained, 41 of them are female.
- The success of CLP has attracted support from organizations and individuals within Bangladesh and abroad raising the real prospect that the program will flourish and be sustainable.
- Several thousand copies of the attractive student’s manual, “*Esho Computer Shikhi*” have been distributed among students at a nominal cost. A revised and improved version of the manual is under preparation.
- CLP has inspired and helped launch other educational and ICT-related programs, such as, Computer Teaches Everyday English (CTEE) and Community for Learning, Information Communication and Knowledge (CLICK) that are relevant to the vision for a Digital Bangladesh.

## **Making Connections**

How does CLP relate to the vision for a Digital Bangladesh? The above overview of the CLP activities and achievements would return a resounding answer, in many useful ways. The CLP experience should help quell any skepticism about the feasibility of realizing a Digital Bangladesh by 2021. If the efforts of a few NRBs could accomplish what has been achieved, the power and resources of the Government together with participation of the private sector, NGOs, and interest groups should be able to fulfill the dream for digitization, provided proper strategies are formulated and implemented. The experience of CLP can be looked upon as the ready-made results of a successful pilot study to spread the ICT education and training to rural Bangladesh, which would be an integral part of the education component of strategy for a Digital Bangladesh.

The computer and Internet will be leveraged for digital management and delivery of educational materials. CLP has already taken important steps in implementation of this idea. In addition to making use of available materials on the Internet, often it will be necessary to present materials in a way that relate to the experience of students. With this end in mind the CTEE project was initiated. CTEE aims at helping students learn aspects of English language, such as, proper English pronunciation, comprehension of spoken English, carrying out a conversation in English that are not commonly emphasized in their regular classes. An English teaching CD-ROM that draws from the daily experiences of students in Bangladesh has been developed, and is being used in a pilot program in five schools with CLCs. The project will help students learn English and develop computer and communication skills, which ought to be a coveted goal for the education sector for digitization of Bangladesh.

The CLICK project is designed to provide advanced ICT training to unemployed educated young people in rural Bangladesh so that they can find employment in ICT related fields. It combines aspects of CLP and *Pallitathya*, an information system for the poor and underprivileged through telecenters initiated by D.Net. Funded by Microsoft, the project operates 13 *Pallitathya Kendras* (Rural Information Centers) in 11 districts in Bangladesh. Every *Pallitathya Kendra* (PTK) is equipped with 7 computers, Microsoft Unlimited Potential (MSUP) curriculum, Internet connection, mobile phone, information and knowledge base, and pertinent logistics. In addition to vocational ICT training (such as, desktop publishing, web development, and database) the PTKs provide livelihood information on health, agriculture, education and other areas, and ancillary services (such as, soil test, pond water pH test, photography, composition and printing, commercial mobile phone etc.). These again are services that a Digital Bangladesh will be expected to provide to its citizens in rural areas.

The Computer Literacy Program is indeed a step towards a Digital Bangladesh, as it has explored some of the territories that have to be charted to realize that lofty vision.





# The evolution of the Khan Computer Literacy Centers in Bangladesh

Amla



Mamun Smrity

Babrijhar



Mirzanagar

Borosalgbar



Parkhidirpur

Baruahat



Goalgram

Bhaterchar



Shologhar

Borogandia



Two Star

**Imdad Sitara Khan Foundation**  
**We salute.**

# Our Chief Guest Tonight



**Ambassador M. Humayun Kabir** - Humayun Kabir became ambassador of Bangladesh to the United States on July 20, 2007. A career diplomat with the rank of deputy permanent secretary, Ambassador Kabir previously served as Bangladesh's high commissioner to Australia, New Zealand and Fiji (2006-07), as well as ambassador to Nepal (2003-06). In addition, he was director-general at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for South Asia and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (2003), for Europe (2002), and for the United Nations (2001). He also served as deputy high commissioner (1999-01), first secretary and counselor (1991-94) at the Bangladesh Embassy in India, counselor at the Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York (1996-99), and second and first secretary at the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington (1987-91). Additional postings include director of the U.N. and Foreign Secretary's Office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1994-96), private secretary to the advisor for foreign affairs and section officer at the Foreign Minister's Office (1984-87), and lecturer at the University of Dhaka (1977-80). Ambassador Kabir is a Computer Literacy Program patron and he visited a center in Munshiganj to gain first hand experience in its operation.

# Our Distinguished Panelists for Tonight



Aziz Ahmed is the CEO of UTC Associates, Inc., a leading systems and network integration company targeting public & fortune 1000 firms across many different industry verticals with major focus on Government, Financial, Service Provider, Media, Retail, Education and Pharmaceutical sectors. Mr. Ahmed is also the CEO and founder of Vonair Inc., a leading software provided for multimedia applications for wireline and wireless markets. An accomplished businessman and network architect, Mr. Ahmed was the lead architect of AT&T's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Network. He directed the AT&T Local services team in the NGI (Next generation Internet) Consortium, whose focus was to implement the next generation broadband access network based on IP and Multi-Wavelength Optical Technology.

Mr. Ahmed is very proud to serve as a Board Member to several of the Grameen family of companies in Bangladesh where Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus serves as the Chairman of the Board.

Mr. Ahmed holds a B.E. and M.E. degrees in Electrical Engineering and was an adjunct professor at Pace University



Originally a Physicist, **Dr. Mosleh-Uddin Ahmed** has spent most of his career in Telecommunications industry in R&D, Sales, Marketing, and Project Management. He completed Ph. D. in Theoretical Nuclear Physics at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana in 1979, and did post doctoral research and teaching at Notre Dame and Wayne State University at Detroit, Michigan.

At AT&T Bell Labs and Lucent Technologies Dr. Ahmed held various positions including Senior Sales Manager. He also spent some time as a part time instructor at Rutgers University teaching a number of MBA courses in International Marketing. He currently works at Alcatel-Lucent as a Project Manager in the Wireless Business Unit. His interests include Lunar Astronomy, Computer Literacy Program for Bangladesh, and Table Tennis.



# Our Distinguished Panelists for Tonight



*Dr. Toufiq Ali ended his 39-year career with the Government of Bangladesh in 2007. His last assignment as Ambassador in Geneva, from 2001-7, was eventful in the WTO with the launching of the Doha Round of trade negotiations in 2001. He was the Chair of the Negotiating Group on Trade and Environment – one of the eight negotiating bodies among which all the topics of the Doha Round are distributed. He was also Chair of the Dispute Settlement Panel on the imposition of anti-dumping duties by the US on import of softwood lumber from Canada. Dr. Ali was elected by the Asian Group countries, in 2006, to be their representative in the Working Group on Situations. This is the highest body (comprising one Ambassador from each of the five regional groups) to consider complaints against any country on human rights violations. In 2007, he was elected to Chair this body. After leaving the Government, Dr. Ali joined the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in Vienna as Senior Adviser (Trade), where he stayed till December 2008. An economist by training, Dr. Ali obtained a B.A. Degree from the University of Dhaka, and an M.A.P.E. and Ph.D. from Boston University, USA.*



*Dr. Shantanu Das is a founder of TranSwitch Corporation in Shelton, CT, which started operation in 1989, and is the President and CEO of the company. Prior to TranSwitch Corporation, he held various positions, including President of Spectrum Digital Corporation, a telecommunications equipment company, where he worked from 1986 through August of 1988. Before joining Spectrum, he held various executive positions, including Director, Applied Technology Division of ITT Corporation's Advanced Technology Center in Shelton, CT.*

*He received his B.E. and M.E. degrees in Electronics and Telecommunications Engineering from Jadavpur University, Calcutta, India, in 1965 and 1968, respectively, and his Doctor of Science (D.Sc) in Electrical Engineering from Washington University, St. Louis, U.S.A., in 1973. On October 27, 2001, Dr. Das was honored by the Alumni Board of Governors of Washington University when he was presented the "Distinguished Alumni Award," in recognition of outstanding achievements and services that reflect honor upon Washington University.*



*Dr. Mohammad Farooque, a 1969 Chemical Engineer from BUET, Bangladesh is the Senior Vice President and Distinguished Fellow, Direct Fuel Cell Technology at Fuel Cell Energy, Danbury, CT. Dr. Farooque is a fuel cell industry expert and the leading contributor to the development of the direct fuel cell (DFC) power plant. The unique ultra-efficient ultra-clean DFC power plant that he helped to develop and holds the key patents is now being marketed in the USA, Europe and Asia. Dr. Farooque is involved with the Computer Literacy Program from the beginning and contributed to its growth.*

# Glimpses of a Digital Dream

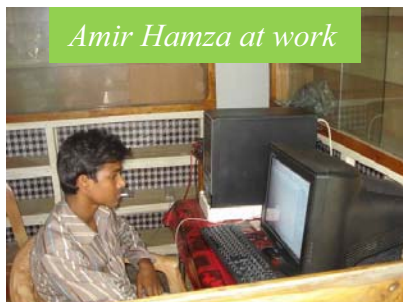
*Zahid-Al-Mahadi and Ajoy Kumar Bose, D.Net, Dhaka*

Nagashori in Kurigram is not much different from the other 87,362 (Census 2001: BBS, Dhaka) villages in Bangladesh--that is until you are startled by a tiny store boasting its name “Zakia Computers”. Once you get over the initial shock, you venture inside. There you find Amir Hamza (14 yrs) working diligently on his computer. Now you are really curious to find out what in the world is this young lad working on. However, seeing Amir is intent on his job at hand, you decide to wait. Upon finishing his work Amir turns around and disconnects a cell phone from the USB port and hands it over to the eagerly awaiting customer. The customer tries out his phone’s new ring tone and when he hears his favorite “Oh ki garial bhai...”, his face beams and he hands over some money to Amir. In your bewilderment you strike a conversation with Amir and ask him how did learned all these. It turns out it was Amir’s elder brother Mohammad Omar Faruq (17 yrs) who started “Zakia Computers”



Omar’s father, Mohammad Ishak Ali works as a field supervisor in loan section at Islamic Bank Foundation in Nagashori branch. He strives hard to maintain a family of five on his meager pay. His wife works long hours at home to feed and clothe the rest of the family. Life is hard and has been so from day one. All the three children, Omar, Zakia (sister) and Amir are students at Nagashori D.M Academy.

Omar is the eldest son of this family and his younger brother Amir is in class nine. In 2008 Omar attempted the SSC examination but was unsuccessful. That was a hard blow to the family. They are fighting poverty from their childhood and their only hope out is education. That door also seems to be closing. But then something happened. In June of 2008, some organization opened a Computer Literacy Center (CLC) at Nagashori D.M Academy. None of the Ishak’s children has ever seen a real computer except on TV in one of the rich villagers’ home. Touching a computer would be considered a dream for them. Omar was a first batch student of the center. His interest rapidly escalated in this wonderful machine. Shortly after finishing this course at the Center he approached his family with the idea of setting up a business at Nagashori bazaar to help his family. Md. Afzal Hossain, CLC teacher provided considerable assistance and guidance to start the business. Fighting considerable apprehensions, Mr. Ishak took a loan from the office to buy a computer and for the rental for the shop in the market.



Currently **Zakia Computers** downloads ring tones for mobile phones, composes texts and copies CDs. Amir is now enrolled in Computer Literacy Program course in the school but can help. Business seems to be picking up. They earn 400 to 500 taka per day. Omar Faruq wants to go to the Middle East with the money they save from the business.

The Government is talking about Digital Bangladesh. Can the children Bangladesh see a rainbow in their digital dream?

## Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) being applied to Computer Literacy Program

*Afrina Tanzin, Research Associate, D.Net*

Gender gaps that are widespread in access to basic rights, access to and control of resources, in economic opportunities and also in power and political voice are an impediment to development. Technologies are socially constructed and thus have direct impacts on Gender. A rural ICT4D project cannot automatically address the gender divide in access, use and appropriation for changing lives in positive ways.

Association for Progressive Communications ([www.apc.org](http://www.apc.org)) Women's Networking Support Program (APC WNSP)<sup>1</sup> selected an ongoing project operating by D.Net titled "Empowering underprivileged youth in Bangladesh through computer literacy (CLP)" for applying their adopted Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM)<sup>2</sup> for rural ICT4D project for evaluating the project.

As a GEM practitioner D.Net has been applying GEM for its ICT4D projects gradually. This is a one year research project,



*Ms. Angela Marianne Kuga Thas, Gender Specialist of APC sharing research technique with D.Net*

The project output will be a report analyzing the gender dimension of the Computer Literacy Program. The GEM adaptation process aims at sensitizing the project operation stakeholders about gender issues to become more effective in creating access to computer training for the underprivileged. The main research question is whether application of GEM makes a project more effective for the community.

For the research work we selected 30 schools as of CLP program starting date for selecting old and new schools, Geographical distribution of schools, Rural-urban schools, girls, boys and coeducation schools. The data gathering strategy was defined after defining the evolution indicators. We collected data by conducting Focus Group Discussion, Observation and case study and interviewed students, teachers, parents by questionnaire fill up.

After completing the survey a report will be prepared and submit the report to APC WNCP and VAB-NJ.

<sup>1</sup> APC WNSP is a South Africa based global network of women who support women networking for social change and women's empowerment, through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

<sup>2</sup> The Gender Evaluation methodology captures general project performance indicators, as well as indicators related to gender impact of an ICT project, developed by APC-WNSP.

## Volunteers Association for Bangladesh (VAB)

While VAB-NJ focuses on skill training, essentially computer skills, for the disadvantaged rural youth of Bangladesh, its parent organization, Volunteers Association for Bangladesh (VAB), focuses on quality secondary education for the poorest children in rural Bangladesh. VAB is a non-profit organization, established in 1999 by Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) and friends, which raises funds abroad through its head office in Irvington, NY, and implements Programs in Bangladesh through its Dhaka office.

The effectiveness of the VAB Programs in spreading high quality secondary education is borne out by the results of the VAB students in the national high school-graduating SSC examination. VAB high school scholarship awardees who took the SSC exam this year repeated the success story of their predecessors last year. Like last year, their accomplishments this year were brilliant – 91.9% of the VAB scholarship awardees passed the national exam, nearly 25 percentage points more than the nationwide average of 67.4%. Of the 158 successful VAB students, 141 (89.2%) obtained ‘A’ grade; of the latter, 32 obtained ‘A+’ grade. This exceptional success is more remarkable when we consider that VAB’s students have to overcome not only the rich-poor divide prevailing in the education scene in Bangladesh, but the urban-rural divide too.

The 31 rural schools under VAB’s Programs also fared exceptionally in 2009 – 2,127 students from these schools appeared in the SSC exam, 1,623 (76.3%) passed, nearly 9 percentage points more than at the national level. About 6 out of 10 successful students obtained ‘A’ grade. One can conclude arguably that such remarkable achievements of VAB’s rural schools were possible only as a result of the integrated secondary education Programs of VAB – **VAB’s scholarship Program** enabled underprivileged rural students to complete four years of high school education and take the national high school-graduating examination; **VAB’s school improvement Program** enriched the facilities of the ill-equipped rural schools; **VAB’s teachers’ training Program** strengthened the abilities of the untrained rural teachers to provide quality education; and **VAB’s SSC examinees’ tutoring Program** offered the opportunity to disadvantaged rural students for reinforcing classroom education, which only affluent urban students can afford.

It is over the last five years (2005-2009) that all of these 4 high school-oriented Programs of VAB have been phased in. The trend in the outcomes is very clear indeed – from a 51.5% pass rate in the then 17 VAB schools in 2005, the pass rate increased to 66.3%, 75.7% and 76.3%, respectively, in the 15 VAB high schools in 2006, 27 VAB high schools in 2008 and 31 VAB high schools in 2009 (2007 was an anomalous year). At the same time, the growth in ‘A’ students (from 106 in 2008 to 158 in 2009 among VAB scholarship awardees and from 569 in 2008 to 958 in 2009 among SSC candidates from VAB schools) reflects high quality education. In the future, two other Programs are expected to reinforce quality secondary education – **VAB’s tutoring Program for Vith Graders** to overcome the learning deficiencies carried over from primary education and **VAB’s preschool Program** to give a chance for education to the marginalized children of rural Bangladesh who would have fallen by the wayside. At the other end, **VAB’s college scholarship Program** gives an opportunity to the rural youth who, based on their accomplishments in the SSC exam, deserve a college education but cannot afford it.

To help VAB, you may offer your service and make generous donation for VAB Programs. Please write your check to VAB and mail it to: VAB, P.O.Box 234, Irvington, NY 10533. **For details, visit VAB Web site: [www.vabonline.org](http://www.vabonline.org). For queries, contact ATR Rahman – (914) 591-8635; Delwar Hossain – (516) 761-4400; Mohammad Farooque –(732) 829-0341. Mahfuz Chowdhury – (516)-485-2783; Fazlur R Chowdhury – (845)-642-8048.**

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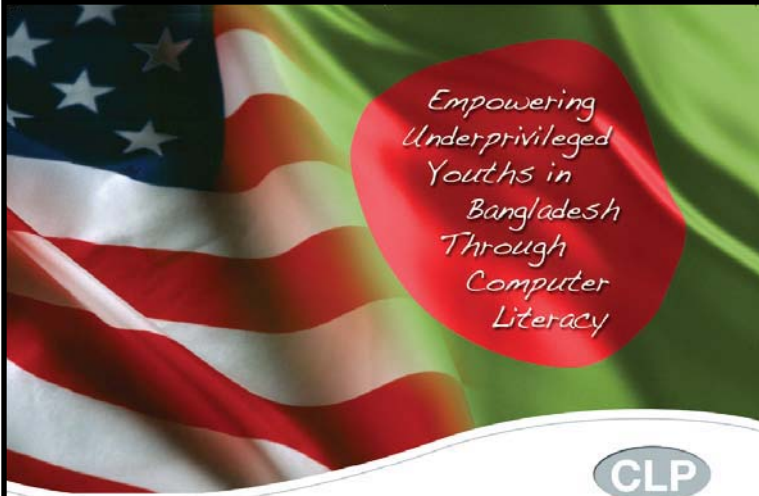


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# Computer Teaches Everyday English: Role of Multimedia in Learning Foreign Language

*Mostan Zida Alnoor & Ajoy K. Bose of D.Net and Shuddhawatta Rafiq (VAB-NJ)*

## 1.0 Introduction

Two of the major objectives of Volunteers Association for Bangladesh (VAB) are to promote quality education and to promote computer literacy and training. VAB New Jersey chapter (VAB-NJ) launched its Computer Literacy Program (CLP) in 2004 with a view to propagate computer literacy in underprivileged youths in Bangladesh. While CLP has become a successful venture and has been able to establish 107 Computer Learning Centers (CLC), VAB-NJ has moved on to the next step to introduce Computer Teaches Everyday English (CTEE), a further step to toward achieving these objectives. Since English is the global language and the dynamic nature of communicative English is evolving over time, the development and dissemination of English curriculum for everyday use has been taken as the first step of the broader program of promoting quality education in Bangladesh. Within the scope of this project, VAB-NJ wants to promote education in Bangladesh: (i) by developing quality curriculums with real life applicability of some major subjects, (ii) disseminating the course in an interesting and interactive manner with the help of recent developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). With the financial support of VAB-NJ this project is being experimented in several schools of Bangladesh. The experiment was facilitated by D.Net, a Bangladesh based research institute.

## 2.0 Objectives of the Project:

The broad objectives of the project include:

- Develop an interactive English learning audiovisual content and implement the developed content for the young learners on a pilot basis.
- Increase interest and reduce anxiety among the children and youths to learn English.
- Create an environment for the intended target group to learn English language using ICTs.
- Improve the capacity and approach of the English course teachers in effectively teach everyday English language using ICTs.
- Understand the impact of the intervention and share the lessons with different stakeholders.

The beneficiaries of this project are:

Primary beneficiaries: Students of Class VI- VIII

Secondary beneficiaries: Underprivileged youths in the rural areas of Bangladesh

Tertiary beneficiaries: Anybody, who wants to improve English

## 3.0 The Process

To achieve the above mentioned objectives, a CD was developed and presented in ten schools. Prior to developing the multimedia content in CDs, D.Net conducted an intense baseline survey



for gaining an idea the methods teachers employ to teach their students in different schools and what areas of English they emphasize the most. This survey mainly focused on:

- Teachers' current methods of teaching.
- Student deficiencies reported by the teacher.
- Teacher deficiencies reported by the teacher.
- Teachers' suggestions for the CD.
- Overall reaction to the concept of using multimedia in teaching and learning process.
- Teacher deficiencies reported by the Head teachers.
- Identification of problems which may occur with the proposed model.
- Suggestions made by the Head teachers and teachers regarding the content.

Based on the outcome of this survey, D.Net produced a basic outline/framework for a CD based multimedia English learning. There are eleven lessons in the CD and each lesson runs for about forty five minutes. The contents of lessons are presented in Figure 1 (overleaf). Before presenting the CDs in class room environment, a two days'long workshop was conducted to initiate the school teachers. Two teachers from each of the participating ten schools took part in the workshop and gave their valuable comments on the multimedia content. Afterwards the final experiment was carried out in ten schools where CLCs were functioning.



Figure1: The contents of the CD of CTEE.

#### 4.0 The Experiment

In each of the ten participating schools two groups of students were selected (with a size of 10) with similar mix of students based on their results in the immediately past final examinations,

total sample size was 100 from control and 100 from experimental group. For both groups an English test was arranged. The answer scripts were evaluated and graded like “Strong (S)”, “Medium (M)” and “Weak (W)”, with the help of the teachers. In the control group, 61% were in the weak group, 25% were in the medium group, and the rest 14% were in the strong group. On the other hand, the result of the pre-test for the experimental group was: weak: 65%, medium: 22%, strong: 13% (Figure 2).

After the pre-test, the course was conducted using the multimedia learning CD. Classes took place in regular class rooms using a big monitor on wheel to show the multimedia content. After that the students got time to browse content in the computer lab themselves in pairs. The research team observed the behavior of students and took notes. When the entire course was finished, another test was taken for both control group and experimental group. It is to be mentioned that, the control group received only traditional English class. The result of the post-test showed that the impact of the multimedia-based learning was significant. The result of the control group was: weak: 46, medium: 31, strong: 13. On the other hand, the result of the experimental group was: weak: 32, medium: 45, strong: 23. For the control group number of students in the strong group is reduced by 1. The number of weak students also reduced to 46 from 61. For the experimental group, number of students in the strong group increased from 13 to 23, a 77% rise. The number of students in weak group reduced from 65 to 32, reduced by 51% (Figure 2).

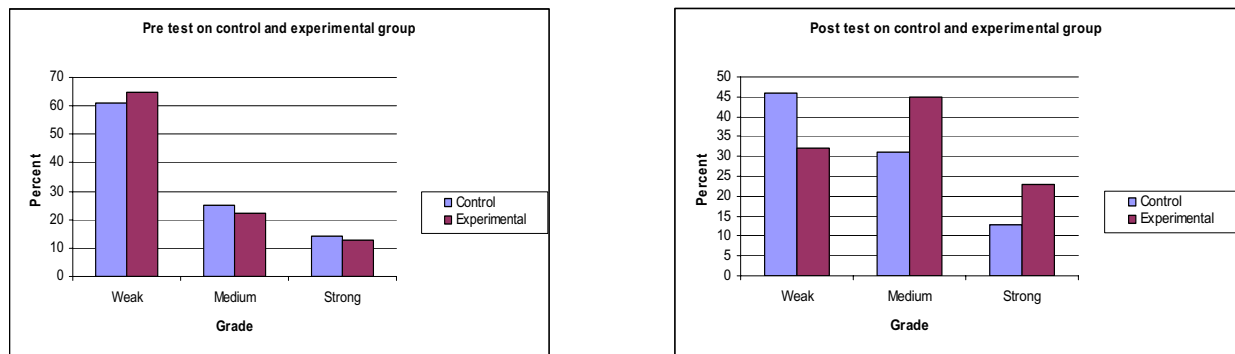


Figure 2: Comparison of Grades between Pre (conventional) and Post (with multimedia presentation) Test Scenarios.

## 5.0 Concluding Remarks

During the experiment the students were extremely excited with their new learning system. Especially the animated picture and the movement of the characters made them spell bound. They spent much more time with the exercise, as the exercise has been designed as different popular games, like Cricket, *Carom Board*, and Football. However, the following challenges were also identified during this experimentation process:

- Availability of electricity is intermittent across the country and the rural area is a severe victim in this case.
- Most of the students who are located outside Dhaka do not have access to computer and a lot of them did not even see computer before.
- Since the class size of a usual school of Bangladesh is at least seventy to eighty students, it would be problematic to use small and only one monitor. In that case either a projector or more than one monitor should be used for each class.

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Jahan	Kauser	Sickerville	NJ
Jalal	Syed	Leonia	NJ
Jamil	Arshad	Boonton	NJ
Kabir	Mohammed G.	Parsipanny	NJ
Kabir	Lubna	Bridgewater	NJ
Kadakhia	Shimul	Basking Ridge	NJ
Kader	Abdul	Ozone Park	NY
Kamal	Abu Sayeed	Woodbridge	NJ
Kamal	Sheikh	Wallington	NJ
Kamal	Murtaza	Pueblo	CO
Kar	Amalendu	Burlington	NJ
Karim	Ahsanul	East Windsor	NJ
Karim	M.R.	Wayside	NJ
Karim	Mohammad A.	Virginia Beach	VA
Khan	Mahbubur	Nee Hyde	NY
Khan	Monica	Edison	NJ
Khan	Romel	Cliffwood	NJ
Khan	Nilufa (Madhuri)	Edison	NJ
Khan	Dewan S.	Marlboro	NJ
Khan	Subarna	Edison	NJ
Khan	Amzad	Edison	NJ
Khan	Mahmudul Huq	Towaco	NJ



## **Patrons of Computer Literacy Program (as of July 2009)**

Last Name	First Name	City	State
Khan	Emdad	San Jose	CA
Khan	Selina		
Khandker	Rezaul	Phoenixville	PA
Khondker	Sufian	Holliswood	NY
Khosnu	Esha	West Orange	NJ
Kram	Kathryn	Columbus	OH
Lodhi	Tajul	Edison	NJ
Maglio	Frank	North	NJ
Mahmood	Burhan	Bridgewater	NJ
Mainuddin	Mohammed	Lodi	NJ
Mamun	Al	Marlboro	NJ
Mamun	Kazi	Belle Mead	NJ
Maniky	Zinat	Brooklyn	NY
Mansor	Azra	Fort Lee	NJ
Mansur	Iqbal	West Chester	PA
Mate	Neil	Brooklyn	NY
Mathbor	Sabrina	Neptune	NJ
Mathbor	Golam	Neptune	NJ
Maureen			
Mesbahuddin	Mirza	Woodside	NY
Mohiuddin	Mohammad	Marlboro	NJ
Mohiuddin	Khaja	Lewis Center	OH
Mohsen	Pia	Cranbury	NJ
Mohsen	Farrukh	Cranbury	NJ
Mohsen	Paulash	Cranbury	NJ
Momin	Mohammed		
Mowla	Robbie	Farmingdale	NJ
Munir	Syed	Edison	NJ
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Nabi	Nuran	Cranbury	NJ
Nabi	Zeenat	Cranbury	NJ
Nag	Jayanta K.	Cheshire	CT
Nahar	Nurun	Marlboro	NJ
Nayeem	AFM Abdun	Glastonbury	CT
Noaz	Golam G.	Ocean	NJ
Pagoumain	David	Edison	NJ
Park	William	Astoria	NY
Parvin	Tahmina	Lancaster	PA
Pasha	Rafique	Plano	TX
Paul	Pradip	Cranford	NJ
Prabhakar	N.D.	Marlboro	NJ
Pramanik	Birendra	Parsipanny	NJ
Quabili	Ahmadur	Houston	TX
Quaderi	Masurur Ali	Jamaica	NY
Quaderi	Serajjus	Marlboro	NJ
Quadry	Mian	Brooklyn	NY
Rafiq	Shuvo	Princeton	NJ
Rahim	Abdur	Brooklyn	NY

Last Name	First Name	City	State
Rahman	Dewan	Kearny	NJ
Rahman	Siddiquir	Lawrenceville	NJ
Rahman	Mohammad H.r	Jamaica	NY
Rahman	Moshiur	Marlboro	NJ
Rahman	Mohammad A.	Jersey City	NJ
Rahman	M. Dalil	Flemington	NJ
Rahman	ATR	Irvington	NY
Rahman	Lutfur		
Rahman	Mahfuzar	Jersey City	NJ
Rahman	Rasheq		
Rahman	Sk Ziaur		
Rahman	Anisur	Mendham	NJ
Rahman	Azizur	Yorktown Hts.	NY
Rahman	Miron	East Windsor	NJ
Rahman	Mohammed	N. Bellmore	
Rahman	Monjour	Tuxedo Park	NY
Rahman	Muhammad	Brooklyn	NY
Rahman	Sayedur	Bristol	CT
Rahman	SK Mafizur	Bronx	NY
Rahman	Waliur	Lakewood	NJ
Rashid	Mashiyat	W. Bloomfield	MI
Rashid	Abdur	Lawrenceville	NJ
Rashid	Harunor		
Rashid	Aminur	Howell	NJ
Rashid	Malik Mahbubur	Brooklyn	NY
Ripon	Nazrul Islam	Bayshore	NY
Roy	Sumit	Bridgewater	NJ
Roy	Kiran Kumar	Woodside	NY
Rozario	Liberatus D.	Princeton JCT.	NJ
Sabri	M. Zaki	Brooklyn	NY
Saleh	Javed	Skillman	NJ
Samad	Anwar	New York	NY
Saquib	Mohammad	Carrolton	TX
Sarkar	Arun	Dayton	NJ
Sarker	Samir Kanti	New Hyde Pk	NY
Sarker	Abdul Qayyum	Colonia	NJ
Sattar	Wasif	Monroe	NJ
Sayeed	Fakrul	Voorhees	NJ
Sayeed	Zulfiquar	East Windsor	NJ
Sengupta	Ashim	Califon	NJ
Shahabuddin	M.	Lincroft	NJ
Shah	Lata R.	Edison	NJ
Shahidain	Rony	Lexington	KY
Shaikh	M. G. R.	Middletown	NY
Shaikh	Badrud	Jamaica	NY
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Shamim	Noor	Milford	PA
Shekalus	William	Mount Kisco	NY

## Patrons of Computer Literacy Program (as of July 2009)

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Shurawardi	Ghulam	Parlin	NJ
Siddique	Shamsul	Brooklyn	NY
Siddique	Yousuf	Greenvale	NY
Siddiqui	Faruq M. A.	Wallingford	PA
Siddiqui	Kaihan	Cliffside Pk	NJ
Sikdar	Hironmony	Voorhees	NJ
Sohrab	Golam	Corona	NY
Still	Joseph M.	Augusta	GA
Sultana	Shirin	Cranbury	NJ
Taher	Muhammed	Champaign	IL
Talukdar	Shamsuzzoha	Holmdel	NJ
Tarafder	Habib	Edison	NJ
Tariq	Quazi Al	Middletown	NY
Uddin	Mohammad A.	Borden Town	NJ
Uddin	Shams	Trenton	NJ
Uddin	Nancy	Tinton Falls	NJ
Ullah	Zaker	Essex	UK
Ullah	Saadi	Randolph	NJ
Wahab	Atiya	Wrightstown	NJ
Warsi	Ghulam	Randolph	NJ
Xenon Company		Edison	NJ
Yunus	Anisa S.	Mckees Rocks	PA
Yusuf	Mohammed	Edison	NJ
Zaman	Mohammad. Q	Elmont	NY
Zaman	Mohammad	Marlboro	NJ
Zaman	Aynan	Marlboro	NJ
Zevallos	Manuel	Woodhaven	NY
Ziauddin	Abu		NJ
<i>Bangladesh Students Assoc.</i>		Rutgers	NJ
<i>Khan Foundation</i>		Saratoga	CA
<i>KS Engineers</i>		Newark	NJ

Last Name	First Name	City	State
Metlife	Metroplolis Financial Gro	New York	NY
Emcure Pharmaceuticals USA Inc		E.Brunswick	NJ
G.S. Development		Astoria	NY
HomeXPerts Realty		Woodside	NY
Hoque Realty		Jamaica	NY
Horizon Staffing Services		E. Hartford	CT
IH Engineers		Princeton	NJ
Mohammed Talat Hussain		Marlboro	NJ
Montgomery Driving School		N.Brunswick	NJ
NABIC		Oakridge	TN
Napco LLC Operations Acct		Edison	NJ
New York Mortgage Company		Jackson Hts	NY
NYMC		New York	NY
Our House Restaurant		Farmingdale	NJ
Salam & Associates		Brooklyn	NY
SBLI USA Mutual Life Ins.Co., Inc		New York	NY
Shalimar Restaurant		Atlantic City	NJ
Sign Media International		Woodside	NY
Solomon Insurance Agency		New York	NY
SSNT Real Estate & Mgt Inc.		Jamaica	NY
Terry Liebman, Dental Excellence		Brooklyn	NY
The Morton Foundation		Manhattan	NY
The Print Shoppe		Aberdeen	NJ
Todd A. Cohen, ESQ		Freehold	NJ
Unique Dental Care		Jackson Hts	NY
UTC Associates		New York	NY
Wells Fargo Home Mortgage		Jackson Hts	NY
West Side Medical Center		New York	NY
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## Established Computer Literacy Centers and Sponsors as of July 2009

#	Name of Center	Address	Starts Date	Sponsor
1	Hazi Kashem Ali Degree College	Mymensingh Sadar	Mar '05	Nasim Ali, Princeton, NJ
2	Hazi Kashem Ali Mohila College	Mutkagacha, Mymensingh	Mar '05	Nasim Ali, Princeton, NJ
3	Bagerhat Bahumukhi High School	Amlapara, Bagerhat	Apr '05	Lubna Kabir, Bridgewater, NJ
4	Mukul Niketon High School	Mymensingh Sadar	Mar '05	Zaki Hossain, Long Land, NY
5	Shamsuddin Nahar Youth Excellence Center	Baitpur, Bagerhat	Apr '05	Shamsun Nahar, Marlboro, NJ
6	Amla Sadarpur High School	Amla, Kushtia	Apr '05	Imdad-Sitara Khan Foundation, CA, USA
7	Shahid President Ziaur Rahman College	Goalgram, Kushtia	Mar '05	Imdad-Sitara Khan Foundation, CA, USA
8	Jamila Model High School	Khukni, Sirajgonj	June '05	Amzad Khan, Edison, NJ
9	Kadambari High School	Kadambari, Madaripur	June '05	Swapan Kumar Gayen, NJ
10	Farha Madhomik School	Komrail, Khulna	June '05	S.K. Bakar, NY, NY
11	Mirzanagar Touhid Academy	Subar Bazar, Feni	June '05	Imdad-Sitara Khan Foundation, CA, USA
12	Barashaighar Union High School	Baroshalghar, Comilla	June '05	Imdad-Sitara Khan Foundation, CA, USA
13	Baruahat High School	Baruahat, Rangpur	June '05	Imdad-Sitara Khan Foundation, CA, USA
14	Mamun Smriti Public High School	Chantia Bazar, Jamalpur	June '05	Imdad-Sitara Khan Foundation, CA, USA
15	Parkhidirpur Maddhomik Biddalaya	Parkhidirpur, Pabna	June '05	Imdad-Sitara Khan Foundation, CA, USA
16	Shologhar AKSK High School	Shologhar, Munshigonj	June '05	Imdad-Sitara Khan Foundation, CA, USA
17	Babrihar High School	Babrihar, Nilphamari	June '05	Imdad-Sitara Khan Foundation, CA, USA
18	Bhaterchar D.A. Mannan Pilot High School	Bhaterchar, Munshigonj	June '05	Imdad-Sitara Khan Foundation, CA, USA
19	Ghagotia Chala High School	Chala Bazar, Gazipur	June '05	Zia Uddin & Ranu Ahmad, Monroe, NJ
20	BL High School	Amlapara, Sirajgonj	June '05	A. A. Chowdhury, Portsmouth, VA
21	Laskardia Atkur Rahman High School	Laskardia, Faridpur	Feb '06	Shah and Anisa Yunus, Pittsburgh, VA
22	McPherson Public Library	Bagerhat Sadar	Feb '06	Monira Haque, Edison, NJ
23	Khaikara High School	Khaikara, Gazipur	Feb '06	Taher U. Akhand, Glastonbury, CT
24	Kurigram Girls High School	Kurigram Sadar	Feb '06	KBM Zaman, Cleaveland, Ohio
25	Banna Kandi N.M. High School	Bannakandi, Sirajgonj	Feb '06	A. A. Chowdhury, Portsmouth, VA
26	Karihata High School	Karihata, Gazipur	Feb '06	Zia Uddin & Ranu Ahmad, Monroe, NJ
27	Rasulpur Basirun Nessa High School	Rasulpur, Tangail	Feb '06	Emdadul Haque, Port Orange, FL
28	Maharajpur High School	Maharajpur, C.Nababgonj	Feb '06	Waled H. Chowdhury, Long Island, NY
29	North Bengal Medical College	Sirajgonj Sadar	Feb '06	A. A. Chowdhury, Portsmouth, VA
30	Panchani High School	Panchani, Chandpur	Feb '06	Mohammad Zafarullah, San Jose, CA
31	Nadir Hossin Girls High School	Kashba Najail, Rajbari	Feb '06	Faizul Islam, Houston, Texas
32	Nasirkote High School	Nasirkote, Chandpur	Feb '06	Sultan Alam, Holmdel, NJ
33	Adhunika Bangladesh Society	Azimpur, Dhaka	Feb '06	Adhunika Bangladesh Society, Dhaka
34	M.A. Karim Bahumukhi High School	Hinga Nagar, Tangail	Feb '06	SpandaanB, San Jose, CA
35	Ambarikhana Girls High School	Sylhet, Sylhet	Feb '06	Z. Ahmed, S. Ahmed, M. Hussain, PA/NJ/NJ
36	Kazi Jalaluddin Bahumukhi Girls High School	Sylhet, Sylhet	Feb '06	Nasreen Rab, US



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#	Name of Center	Address	Starts Date	Sponsor
37	Ekuria High School	Ekuria, Gazipur	June '06	Zia Uddin & Ranu Ahmad, Monroe, NJ
38	Shahabab Bazar High School	Shahabab Bazar, Sylhet	June '06	F. Zaman, R.Hossain, M. Ahmed, Hicksville, NY
39	Rifayetpur High School	Rifayetpur, Kushtia	June '06	A. K. Azad, East Greenbush, NY
40	Barura Govt Girls High School	Barura, Comilla	June '06	Monowara Begum, NY, USA
41	Tarail Pilot High School	Tarail, Kishorganj	Dec '06	Bank Asia, Dhaka, Bangladesh
42	Malkhanagar School & Collage	Malkhanagar, Munshigonj	Dec '06	Bank Asia, Dhaka, Bangladesh
43	Halta Duatola Wazed Ali Khan College	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Dec '06	D.Net, Dhaka, Bangladesh
44	Shanuvar M. A. High School	Uzirpur, Barisal	Feb '07	Sirajul Huq, NJ
45	Montijar Rahman Mia Girls High School	Shailakupa, Jhenaidah	Feb '07	Shahreen Quazi, Boston, MA
46	Shahid Hasan Foyez Girls High School	Haripur, Kustia	Feb '07	Rezbul Chowdhury, Arlington, MA
47	The Old Kustia High School	Haripur, Kustia	Feb '07	Rezbul Chowdhury, Arlington, MA
48	Brahman Baria High School	Brahman Baria Sadar	Feb '07	Salahudin Shahriar, PA
49	Darbesgonj High School	Kachua, Chandpur	Apr '07	Serajus Salekin Quaderi, NJ
50	Paschim Banskhalj Upakullia College	Banskhalj, Chittagong	Apr '07	Mahfuz R.Chowdhury, NJ
51	Shailan Surma High School	Dhamrai, Dhaka	Apr '07	Dailur Rahman, NJ
52	SURAVI	Dhanmondi, Dhaka	Apr '07	Musaddeq Hussain, NJ
53	Shalkuria High School	Nabangonj, Dinajpur	July '07	Muhtit Rahman, OH
54	Setabganj Pilot High School	Setabgonj, Dinajpur	July '07	Muhtit Rahman, OH
55	Panchagar B. Proshad Govt. High School	Panchagar Sadar	July '07	Muhtit Rahman, OH
56	Hasaha K.K. High School	Sreenagar, Munshigonj	July '07	Rashid Hasan, NJ
57	Ulania Coronation High School	Mehendigonj, Barisal	July '07	Tazin Shadid, WA
58	South Satara High School	Chagalnaiya, Feni	July '07	Tazin Shadid, WA
59	Satkania Golam Bari High School	Satkania, Chittagong	July '07	Bank Asia, Dhaka, Bangladesh
60	Mehandigonj Muktiyodhya Sangsad	Mehandigonj, Barisal	July '07	Tazin Shadid, WA
61	Coronation High School	Bogra Sadar, Bogra	Feb '08	KBMQ Zaman, OH
62	Garda A.F. Mujibur Rahman Secondary School	Faridpur Sadar, Faridpur	Feb '08	Shah Yunus, Pittsburgh, USA,
63	Shila Roy Chowdhury High School	Jessore Sadar, Jessore	Feb '08	BUET Alumni, Huston, Texas, USA
64	Nasirkote Shahid Smriti College	Hazigonj, Chandpur	Apr '08	Sultan Alam, NJ, USA
65	Gorpara M.L High School	Manikgonj Sadar	Mar '08	Humayara Islam Khan, Bangladesh
66	Ranigonj Mohila College	Ghoraghat, Dinazpur	May '08	Muhtit Rahman, USA
67	Loka BL High School	Nababgonj, Dinazpur	May '08	Muhtit Rahman, USA
68	Daudpur BL High School	Nababgonj, Dinazpur	May '08	Muhtit Rahman, USA
69	Nageswari D.M. Academy	Nageswari, Kurigram	May '08	Shaju A. Shahjahan, OH
70	Shayestabad Girls High School	Barisal Sadar, Barisal	Feb '08	Hossain Trust, Dhaka
71	Chunato High School	Lohagara, Chittagong	Mar '08	Bank Asia Ltd. Bangladesh
72	Adhunagar High School	Lohagara, Chittagong	Mar '08	Bank Asia Ltd. Bangladesh

## Established Computer Literacy Centers and Sponsors as of July 2009

#	Name of Center	Address	Starts Date	Sponsor
73	Padua A.C.M. High School	Lohagara, Chittagong	Mar '08	Bank Asia Ltd. Bangladesh
74	Sayed Habibul Haq High School	Kishorgonj Sadar	Feb '08	Bank Asia Ltd. Bangladesh
75	Hazi Golam Hossen Girls High School	Tarail, Kishorgonj	Apr '08	Bank Asia Ltd. Bangladesh
76	Rajdia Avoy Pilot High School	Sirajdikhan, Munshigonj	Apr '08	Bank Asia Ltd. Bangladesh
77	Palla Mahabub Adarsha High School	Chatkhil, Noakhali	Apr '08	Bank Asia Ltd. Bangladesh
78	Bhimpur Technical School & College	Chatkhil, Noakhali	Apr '08	Bank Asia Ltd. Bangladesh
79	Liton Computers	Ashulia, Dhaka	May '08	Bank Asia Ltd. Bangladesh
80	Ispahani High School	Keranigonj, Dhaka	May '08	Bank Asia, Dhaka, Bangladesh
81	Dinarpur High School	Nabigonj, Hobigonj	Sep. '08	A.M. Chowdhury Mukul, USA
82	Borogandia High School	Daulatpur, Kustia	Sep. '08	Imdad-Sitara Khan Foundation, CA, USA
83	Khandal High School & College	Parshuram, Feni	Apr '09	Suprasad Boidhya Roy, NA, USA
84	Nabinagar Mohila College	Nabinagar, B. Baria	Apr '09	Muhtit Rahman, USA
85	Abu Taher Dakhil Madrasha	Shibchar, Madaripur	Apr '09	Belayet Choudhury, NJ, USA
86	Shuryasen Orphanage	Wazirpur, Barisal	Apr '09	Muhtit Rahman, USA
87	Sree Sree Pronab Math	Nazirpur, Pirojpur	Apr '09	Muhtit Rahman, USA
88	Nageswari Adarsha Pilot Utcha Balika Bidyaloi	Nageswari, Kurigram	Apr '09	Sharmin Shahjahan, OH, USA
89	AK Khan-UCEP Kalurghat Technical School	Chittagong	Apr '09	I-K Foundation, Bangladesh
90	Jamalgonj High School	Akkelpur, Joypurhat	Apr '09	BUET Alumni, Huston, Texas, USA
91	Bagmoniram S.K.City Corp Girls High School	Chittagong	Apr '09	Monowara Begum, NY, USA
92	Dalta Rahmania High School	Ramgonj, Laxmipur	Apr '09	Zafar Ullah, CA, USA
93	Two Star Computers	Daulatpur, Kustia	Apr '09	Imdad-Sitara Khan Foundation, CA, USA
94	Bagmara High School	Comilla	May '09	Pavel Rahman, Canada
95	Kasba T.Ali Degree College	Kasba, B. Baria	May '09	Toufiq Ali, Bangladesh
96	Hemnagar Shashimukhi High School	Gopalpur, Tangail	May '09	NABIC
97	K.G.H.F Mowkhali United Academy	Paikgacha, Khulina	May '09	NABIC
98	Kalipur Ezharul Hoque High School	Banshkhal, Chittagong	May '09	NABIC
99	Noor School	Sujanagar, Pabna	May '09	NABIC
100	Suapur Nannar High School	Dhamrai, Dhaka	May '09	NABIC
101	Chagaladhara High School	Sariakandi, Bogra	June '09	NABIC
102	Bishnapur A. R. High School	Sadar, Gaibandha	June '09	NABIC
103	Khorda Kamarpur High School	Sadullahpur, Gaibandha	June '09	NABIC
104	Habibpur Secondary High School	Wazirpur, Barisal	June '09	NABIC
105	Aoliabad High School	Madhabpur, Hobigonj	June '09	NABIC
106	Nagarkanda College	Nagarkanda, Faridpur	June '09	Shah Yunus, Pittsburgh, USA,
107	Islamabad Girls Orphanage	Chittagong	June '09	Farhat Khan, Chittagong

**Best Wishes to  
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*Zahid-Al-Mahadi and Ajoy Kumar Bose, D.Net, Dhaka*



**Md. Zaharul Islam**

When Mohammad Zaharul Islam Khan Liton (31) came out of prison in Amman, Jordan, his life was at the lowest point. Chasing his dream to make his fortune, Liton had sold a piece of land he inherited from his father to pay the agent who promised a job in Greece. But en route to Greece, while waiting in Amman for a connecting flight, the agent fled leaving Liton in a land where no one understood one word he said. He was promptly arrested and confined for 10 months. Life was never easy for Liton but he always had an enterprising slant. In 1997, while he was barely 16, Liton lost his father during SSC examination. With his father's demise, he was at the helm of the family and wanted to start a small business. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, that dream never materialized. That's when he thought he would get a head start by earning lots of money in a rich foreign land. By a brutal turn of fate he, returned empty handed from Jordan.

His two sisters helped Liton by selling their ornaments and giving him BDT 30,000. He bought a mobile phone, a chair and a table and started a new business at his cousin's shop by renting mobile phone service. It was nothing spectacular, but he managed with his monthly income that averaged about BDT 4,000. A few years later he bought an old computer and self taught word processing. He then expanded his business to include composition and printing business in Ashulia, Savar, Dhaka. This was the beginning of "**Liton Computers**". That is when he got a break. He received hands-on training on computer at a Computer Literacy Center (CLC) funded by Bank Asia Ltd. under the bank's Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) program. That formal training changed the complexion of his business and his life. He has now acquired some of the detail skills that were difficult to learn on his own.

Liton's confidence and enterprise was now sky high. He expanded his business, set up a digital studio. He rented a larger space in Ashulia and started his own computer training shop for the community people. In Ashulia, most of the people work in the export processing zone (EPZ) and computer skills are highly valued. But computer training facilities are either not available or too expensive. Stars lined up when Computer Literacy Program (CLP), Bank Asia Ltd and D.Net collaborated and provided Liton with the minimum skills he needed. In turn "**Liton Computers**" is now offering computer training to the community people, youths and students. Liton charges very reasonable fees. Liton will allow payments by installments for worthy candidates. Within just one year Liton's life changed. He now boasts of having trained about 1,000 students. Many students got better jobs at EPZ and increased salaries because now they are skilled in computers. Four of his students are working at "**Liton Computers**". Liton now earns on the average 25,000 (twenty five) taka per month. He is also giving back his due share by helping the community. At "**Liton Computers**", school teachers get 50% discount, poor students can learn computer at free of cost.



Will Liton stop there?



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## Atiur Rahman: from cattle-herder to economist

(An inspiring example about how a little generosity can make a monumental impact)

*Rajib Ahmad* – (Translated from Bengali KBM Quamruzzaman)



Governor-elect of Bangladesh Bank Dr. Atiur Rahman, a respected economist, spent his childhood herding goats and cattle! In the journey from that past to present he had to make many sacrifices and struggle a lot. Here is the story in his own words:

I was born in a remote village in the district of Jamalpur. Jamalpur town was 14 kilometers away from our village and to go there we would have to trek the distance on foot or ride a bicycle. In the entire village the only person with a matriculation degree was my uncle Mafizuddin. My father was a peasant, stark poor and without any land. We were 5 brothers and 3 sisters. It was bare subsistence and there were days when we would not have anything to eat.

My paternal grandfather was reasonably solvent. However, he did not provide a place for my father. At a distance from his house we lived in a thatched shack, all eight brothers and sisters and my parents. My mother inherited a small fraction of the assets left by my maternal grandfather. That bought us 3 bighas (1 acre) of land. The land was infertile and my father toiled hard to grow crops that would see us through 5 or 6 months of the year. Poverty was something I knew in my bones – there was no food, no clothes to wear – such was the condition!

My mother had a meager education. My first lessons were from her. I entered the primary school not far from our house. However, my family was so impoverished I could not continue school after getting to the third grade. My elder brother dropped out even earlier and started working. I also had to abandon school in search of a livelihood.

We had one cow and a few goats. Everyday I would tend them in the fields. In the evening I would take the milk from the cow and sell in the market. With earnings from two brothers we were just getting by. As time passed, the earnings from the milk saved us 8 taka and I invested the money to start a pan-biri (cigarette) shop. Everyday, from dawn to dusk I was at the shop. Any dream of education for me started to fade away.

One afternoon my brother told me about a theatre performance at the school field. I recall vividly I did not have a shirt to wear. So I went to see the drama bare-back and wearing only my lungi. The atmosphere at the school was magical, it was joyful and pleasant. It triggered the thought that I too could be like the others. I pledged to myself that I must go back to the school.

On the way back home that evening I queried my brother why could I not go back to the school? It could be the tone of my voice or perhaps the sordid expression on my face that moved him and he took up the cause. He said he would talk to the headmaster. Next day, the two of us went to the school. My brother went inside the office while I waited outside. I remember hearing my brother's pleading that I be allowed to take part in the third grade annual exam. The headmaster made a remark that got etched in my memory, 'education is not for everyone!'

I was dejected by the remark. Whatever confidence I summoned and whatever aspiration I garnered thus far, shattered with that one comment. But my brother was persistent and eventually obtained the permission. Final exam was three months away. Upon returning home I asked for three months of 'leave' from my mother. I also could not stay in the house. There was no food, clothes or books and now I committed to the task of passing an exam.

My mother asked where would I go? I said I would go to the house of Mozammel who was a class-mate and also the 'first boy' in the class. I met his mother before. I was convinced she would not turn me away.

With trepidation I went to Mozammel's place. When I told everything, Khalamma gladly took me in. Food as well as shelter was secured; I started a new chapter of my life. With vigor I started on my studies. Often I would remember the slighting remark of the headmaster. That would strengthen my resolve and I studied harder.

In due time the exam started. With each subject completed I felt good and my spirit lifted up. My confidence level soared. On the day the results were out, I went to the school and sat in the first row. Our headmaster brought the results and I noticed some hesitation while he read them. He was also looking in my direction. Then he announced that I was first in the class. My brother broke into tears. I myself had no emotion – as if this was naturally to be expected.

On the way back home it was a wild scene. I was walking with my brother proudly while a flock of children followed us yelling slogans in my praise. The news spread rapidly. My father, who was illiterate and did not know 'first' from 'last', was ecstatic; he knew his son achieved something quite significant. When he learned that I got promoted to the next grade and will need new books, the next day he took the pet goat to the market and sold it for 12 taka. Then he took me to Jamalpur and we bought new books from Nabanur Library.

There was a complete change in my day-to-day routine. I attended school every day. Time permitting I helped with family chores. In the mean time, I got in the good book of the teachers. Teacher Faiz Maulavi looked after me as if I were his own son. With everyone's affection, attention and care I stood first again to promote to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. My uncle Mafizuddin, the only matriculate of the village, came forward and took me in his house. After completing the primary school I entered Dighapati Junior high – where uncle Mafizuddin was a teacher. Other teachers also came to know my story. Thus, I was bestowed with everyone's affection and care.

One day when I was getting ready to start eighth grade, my uncle brought an advertisement clipping. It was about entrance exam for Mirzapur Cadet College. I duly filled out and sent the form. Here, let me mention that my name used to be Aatur Rahman. When filling the Cadet College form, the headmaster changed it to Atiur Rahman making the following remark to my uncle. He said that I would be somebody important in the future and since there are too many Aataurs around my name should be something different. Thus, I became Atiur.

I spent long nights preparing for the entrance exam. On the set day, I went with my uncle for the exam and that was the first time I had been to Mymensingh. Looking around I was awestruck. Among all the boys I was the only one in pajama and sponge sandals. Perhaps, I should not have gone. I took the exam

feeling that the effort might just be futile. Anyway, after months we got a letter. I did make the preliminary cut. Now I needed to go to Dhaka Cantonment for the final exam.

Everyone was happy but I was in despair. I did not have a pant to wear. Eventually, I borrowed school clerk Kanai Lal's full-pant. Somehow a shirt was also arranged. In due course, I left with my uncle for distant Dhaka. He taught me that when entering the room for oral interview I should ask from the door, 'may I come in sir?' I remembered it and did say it right. However, I said it so loud everyone laughed.

One of the interviewer was the principal of the College, M. W. Pitt. He looked me over and perhaps understood everything about me. With affection he asked me to sit down. Instantly, I felt close to him and knew I had nothing to fear as long as he was around. He looked over the papers from my written exams. Then he talked to the other examiners in English. I did not follow everything but understood they liked me. They did not, however, say anything further. My uncle and I spent the next day seeing sites in Dhaka before returning home. I resumed my school work and other chores assuming I did not stand a chance for the Cadet College.

But then, after three months, the letter came. I made the final selection. I will need Tk150 per month for tuition. I was offered a scholarship of Tk100 per month and my family would have to come up with the remainder. I was heart broken. When there was no guarantee for even the daily square meal in my family, when I was being raised in my uncle's house, nobody could even think about coming up with Tk50 per month.

At this time, my paternal grandfather for the first time came forward to help. After so many years, he became interested in his grandson. He took me around and pleaded with his other sons – should'nt this boy be helped to avail the great opportunity that came his way? Unfortunately, none of my uncles were well-to-do. A one time Tk50 might be possible but the same amount every month was out of question. My grandfather understood the situation and he was at the end of his resources.

With no other avenues open I approached teacher Faiz Maulavi. He told me not to worry for as long as he was around. Next day he took me, with two other helpers, to the market place. He went around from shop to shop. He described the situation to everyone and asked for help. People came forward with 8 ana, 4 ana, 1 taka, 2 taka. A total of Tk150 was raised. My uncles provided Tk50. With that much money in pocket I finally went and enrolled in the Cadet College. After the travel expenses, I was able to deposit Tk150 for three months' tuition. A new life had begun for me.

On the very first day, Principal M.W. Pitt dropped in to see me. I brought up my monetary situation, that I did not have the means to pay further tuition and thus may have to leave after three months. He took up my case to the Board meeting. I was eventually granted a scholarship for full tuition! I never looked back. With many successes along the way, I stood fifth in the tenth grade S.S.C. exam in Dhaka Board.

Thus, my life is a story of indebtedness to so many helping hands from so many common folks. During my career I have helped establish schools and colleges in the area where I grew up. Whenever possible I helped others. However, that sum of 150 taka raised in the market place that day – how can I pay it back? Even if I sacrifice everything I got, that debt will remain unpaid.



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## Why do we volunteer?

*Muht Rahman, Managing Director of Washington & Congress Managers*

In honor of VAB-NJ's annual gathering, I'd like to share a few seemingly random thoughts with you.

- *The cost of two computers – about a thousand dollars; the cost of training two teachers to use and operate them – a couple of hundred dollars; the cost of a wireless modem – another hundred dollars or so. Plunk them together in a small classroom in rural Bangladesh, mix in a bunch of excited teachers and students – and you have something that is truly priceless.*
- *Most things exist on a multi-dimensional gray-scale continuum and one's place in that space is defined primarily by access to resources. Most often, that equates simply and most readily to money. Money is the universal resource. It is, according to Somerset Maugham, "the sixth sense which enables you to enjoy the other five [senses]." Not surprisingly, not everyone has enough sense. But if you have been blessed with wisdom, it is your duty to spread it around.*
- *Religion is the language we use to converse with God. What language we use depends mostly on where and to whom we were born. Some are more gifted in words than others. And some learn many languages. But some time or other, we have all struggled to communicate.*
- *It is seldom difficult to tell right from wrong. Surprisingly, what is right is often also what is the easiest or the simplest. And as Occam's Razor postulates, what is simplest [and still fits the facts] is usually the closest to truth.*
- *We seldom control the hand that life deals us. But how we play it is entirely up to us and to us alone.*

I am not going to try and tie all of the above into a neat little codicil. But my point is that so much of life is spent in pointless pursuits, it is important to pause every once in a while and ponder the greater questions about life, the universe and everything else. And by pondering, I do not mean blindly following the rote path of someone else's pondering. Think for yourself for once. Or twice, or three times or even more! Ask questions – even if the answers are difficult, or worse, make you uncomfortable.

Last night, I was walking by the ocean in Santa Monica, the light of a full moon bathing the vast expanse of waves that seemed to reach to eternity and beyond. The ocean, the full moon and me – and a bustling city around the bend – how do we all fit together? We know that we won't know the answer. Not in our lifetimes we won't. But it is important to pause and ponder the questions. And then it is just as important to move on!

The things that we cannot do or control are practically infinite. But that still leaves us with a vast smorgasbord of things to do and matters to take care of. If I may be so bold, let me suggest that when there are things to do or matters to take care of and we find ourselves with the ability to do something about it – it becomes our duty to rise to the challenge. Nothing less!





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