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Political activism and student-hood



Book of politics!

It is interesting that in many courtiers, political activism by students has a largely different lineament. Why in courtiers like Bangladesh, this has become so pervasive and virulent? With no definite answer, I only can surmise:

Like all societal ills, answer must be lurking in our very societal construct. Ours is a very closely woven society. A change of government, for example, in the United States of America, will have no perceptible bearing on the lives of common people or of students. The curriculum will not be changed. The school administration will remain the same. But in Bangladesh, students consider their personal well being is at stake with change of power in the government.

The very existence of Bangladesh is a glory, student-politics, can aptly be proud Unfortunately, it has now degenerated to a rampant blanket of greed and political cynicism.

If looked at the composition of the highest council of the two prominent parties (BCL and JCD), the average age of the members might be in the early-thirties to mid-thirties. An occasional Adu Bhai is okay, but when it becomes the norm, statistics becomes a little messy. That exactly has happened here.

Minus the monetary gain, perpetual student-hood shall not exist. How the student activists make their thousands (probably millions) is no secret. Extortion, illicit tender etc. are only a few.

The monetary gain is again intimately linked to their linkage to certain political establishment that aid and abet this pernicious practice for their own narrower unpatriotic gain.

But this need not be the whole story. The overwhelming majority of student political activist are just garden variety ideologically naïve students who aspire to do some good for the country and for the society. Unfortunately, their voice is rather meek and thus fails to attain significance.

A sensible approach has to address and redress multiple issues. It is extremely important that the national political establishments understand the adverse effects of their current policy of using students as political capital. They also should address such important ideological issues as it relates to our national identity.

Mohammad Zaman, USA

immigrant Attorney from Pennsylvania, USA. Mr. Sheff charged that Indians, Pakistanis, Afghans and South Americans obtained Bangladeshi passports through the back door from the Bangladesh Embassy and consulates in USA. He goes on to say that few hundred Pakistanis have obtained US Diversity Visa as Bangladeshi-born using fake paper and illicitly obtained Bangladeshi passports.

I feel why our vigilant writers have not responded to Mr. Sheff's letter are because we are ashamed of our corrupt officials.

I have heard many stories on misuse of Bangladesh passports. Once I was told that when Bangladeshis required no visas for entry into Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Canada, and Scandinavian countries, Bangladesh passports were bought and sold by international racketeers specialising in smuggling people to prosperous countries. If you visit the Passport Office in Dhaka you can see for yourself how brokers approach you and offer a package deal to obtain a passport at the shortest possible time.

I have reasons to agree to what Mr. Sheff has said in his letter and was quite ashamed to respond. Thanks to Mr. Ali for opening the

burdensome status on them?

And what our cricket policy-makers have to say about this shameful performance? Quite a handsome budget has been allocated for cricket but what is the outcome? Aren't we looking forward to an impending embarrassment in the forthcoming World Cup?

Alpana Alam
Azampur, Dhaka

Price hike

It has become absolutely impossible to lead decent life with this price hike in every sector be it fuel, bus, electricity etc. The price of almost everything is increasing almost at a regular interval except for an increment in our salary. But if our salary remains the same then how are we to cope up with this price hike. Does the government have any answer to it?

Sameer Moin
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Who are the global terrorists?

I borrow the title from Noam Chomsky's essay in "Worlds in Collision: Terror and the future of Global Order" (Ed. Ken Booth and Tim Dunne, Palgrave Macmillan,

merit in what Mr. Chomsky argues in his essay. It will be a serious flaw if we "describe terrorism as the weapon of the weak. Like most weapons, it is wielded to far greater effect by the strong." Yet when that is done, it is wickedly described as "counter-terror", "just self defence" or to add some exotic flavour, "war to liberate the oppressed and make them free".

Unfortunately though, the crescendo of war cries chiefly by Mr. Bush and Mr. Blair seems to be oblivious to the need and logic of reality check of their case, of more wisdom than arrogance, of solidarity with rather than alienation of the voice ringing around the world against a war of unmitigated terror. Tragic is the fact that seeking peace is viewed as weakness if not unpatriotic. One is left to wonder how safe is world peace in the hands of these "warriors of peace"?

Hussain
Dhaka

Car parking at Motijheel

It is no doubt a praiseworthy decision to build a two-storey car parking space at Motijheel. But it has often been noticed that these public establishments soon become

these days there are letters from ordinary people stating their disagreement with Mr Blair's alliance with Bush. Most people say that there is no clear-cut reason to go to war with Iraq. Most see the impending human misery this would have for the poor people of that land. I am sure that many in Bangladesh can sympathise with that as memories of your own War of Liberation are still fresh in your minds. It is only common sense that it is the innocent who suffer in war. More recently, in Afghanistan, many lives were lost as the so-called great USA tried to find Bin Laden, without success.

It would appear that since September 11th all of the problems in the world are linked back to Bin Laden and Islamic Extremists. I believe that the USA should first look in its own back yard to ask why are these people wanting to rise up against them.

In the case of Blair, he is fast becoming one of our least trusted leaders. People are angry that he appears to be more concerned with keeping Bush happy than with looking after his own country. A Peace Rally has been organised for 15th February in Hyde Park, London, a famous meeting place where people speak about whatever issues they have. However the

reportedly allowed credit facilities to certain clients who were engaged in money laundering. How did the BB come to know about it? Only after news items in this regard were published in national dailies.

About two or three years ago BB forced the management of certain banks to terminate the services of about 20/25 officers. Reason? They had reportedly connived in money laundering. How did the BB come to know about it? They came to know about the alleged irregularities only after a private bank forwarded the letter of a non-resident Bangladeshi to allow him to invest in a proposed new bank as an expatriate director out of the remittance he had sent a few months back. While going through the statement of account of the beneficiary of that particular remittance, the whole thing surfaced.

BB has an Inspection Division called the DBI. This Division deputed officers to inspect different branches of all commercial banks, both NCBs and PCBs, at regular intervals. Why could not the DBI detect the irregularities which were being continued for a considerable long time? Why the Central Bank went for action only after they came to know about the whole thing from newspapers? Has any action been

It is said that petrol, octane and mobil price have shot up in the international market and so the price of fuel have also been raised in our country.

If we can raise the price of imported oil, petrol then why can't we reduce the price of gas when our country is floating on it.

O. H. Kabir
Wari, Dhaka

INS list

The momentum generated by INS listing must continue, and flexible strategies are needed to be in place in order to steer our foreign policy. An important factor would be to keep in touch with the U.S. administration regardless of the final outcome related to the special registration procedure. The important contacts made by our Foreign Minister are invaluable, and must be kept in regular communications.

Also, our Foreign Ministry must be consulted or informed by the Government regarding all the policies that may be used against Bangladesh as propaganda by certain international and local quarters. So that our missions abroad will have a contingency plan ready and ready to counter right away armed with a blueprint, instead of working on a damage

Columbia tragedy

We grieve the tragic end of the lives of seven brave astronauts who dared to go to space to discover the new frontier. Our sincere condolence to their family and colleagues at the NASA whose grief must be unimaginable. It's a great loss for humanity in its adventure to seek out the new world.

The space program has been jolted by this mishap but one hopes NASA will reinforce its endeavour and continue the space shuttle more vigorously. We salute the seven astronauts who perished in the space shuttle Columbia and pray for their soul.

Akku Chowdhury, Banani, Dhaka

It is indeed a sad news that seven astronauts have died in the 'Columbia' disaster. What is more tragic is that among the seven astronauts there was an Indian--Kalpana Chawla.

As a fellow citizen of the sub-continent, I feel proud that one of the citizens of our next door neighbour made it all the way to NASA and most importantly to the space. And at the same time, my heart breaks at the untimely death of this brilliant and outstanding astronaut.

I salute Kalpana Chawla and the other six who perished in the space.

Shoumik Rahman, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

I am really shocked at the space shuttle 'Columbia' mishap. How could such a tragic accident take place that too in reputed institute like NASA?

I mourn the death of the seven brilliant astronauts who devoted their life to discover the undiscovered in the space.

I hope that this accident will give the other astronauts strength and conviction to devote their life in looking for the new world and solving the millions of mystery of the space.

It is indeed a tragic news that that a space shuttle crashed few minutes before its landing. All its crewmembers were killed. The world has lost some extraordinary talents. It is an immense loss.

Despite such tragedy the U.S is determined to continue such risky mission. Couldn't NASA abort this mission as a technical fault was detected before the mission began?

Tapu, S.U.S.T.



Rest in space

"Why not privatise Dhaka University?"

This is my response to Hasanat Alamgir's letter regarding privatisation of Dhaka University (February 2). I thank him for his concern regarding the drowning standard of education at DU.

However, I totally disagree with him about his suggestion to privatise DU. Does he think that poor students from remote villages of the country would be able to pursue higher education after the public universities are privatised?

The solution to rebuild the University still lies in banning politics in the campus. The closure of Adamjee Jute Mill proved that if the government is committed they can be successful in many difficult tasks. If we all are committed we can still rebuild DU, our national pride, without privatising it.

Mohibul
Dhaka

This is my response to Mr. Hasanat Alamgir's letter "Why not privatise

DU?" I fail to understand why Mr. Alamgir propose such a plan which will make DU a university of rich people only?

A student needs at least 3 to 4 lakh taka to complete his study in a private university. And how many of our students can afford that amount of money?

If DU fails to offer healthy educational environment, then authority is responsible for it. Why should the general students bear the burnt? Is it right to deprive the common people of higher education for the failure of others? Privatisation is suitable for developed countries but it is not a suitable plan for Bangladesh where most of the people live below the poverty line.

Sharin Shajahan Naomi
Dhaka

"A serious charge"

This is in response to the letter "A serious charge" (February 03) by Mr AZM Abdul Ali wondering why your vigilant letter writers did not start a debate on a letter (January 27) written by Mr. James P. Sheff, an

debate. I wonder if Bangladesh government would ever think of inquiring into the charges made by Mr. Sheff.

Last but not least, I find it very funny that our political leaders and their supporters are accusing each other over an internal policy of USA. How we are wasting our time and making a fool of ourselves! Like any other country, US has every right to formulate its own internal security policy and keep watch on who is coming in or leaving the country. Sadly enough none of our leaders are saying, "Let us make our country a beautiful place to live so that our children do not have to go to another country for livelihood and peace."

Ziauddin Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka

Bangladesh cricket

It is really sad that Bangladesh has lost to a minnow like Namibia. I'm terrified to think what will happen in the upcoming World Cup.

If a Test playing nation, be it a novice, performs so poorly then what is the logic behind bestowing a

2002).

For the record, long before 9/11, international terrorism had been strongly and explicitly condemned by the UN General Assembly in 1987 (UNGA/ resolution 42/159). For the record again, that resolution was passed with 153 for and 2 against. At that time the US explained its negative vote by what it considered as a fatal flaw. That flaw was that the resolution excluded the right to self-determination, freedom, and independence. That provision then applied notably to the African national congress resistance against apartheid in South Africa, and Israeli military occupation of Palestinian territories.

Recent history has been witness to many other instances where the US engaged openly or covertly in the conduct of grave terrorist acts: Honduras, Nicaragua (during the 80s), not to mention blatant terrorist acts by Israel in Tunis air raid, and the unending atrocities committed since then over past fifty years.

To return to my title, there is much

messy and difficult to use.

There are many standard and conveniently designed bus terminal-cum-shopping complexes connected to railway system and/or metro trains underground or elevated in many developed countries. It would be wise to send our architects and engineers to visit these projects and thus improve the standard of our local ones.

Altaf Choudhury
One-mail

The Iraq crisis - a British view

Throughout the world the newspapers are full of articles on the impending American war in Iraq. Perhaps in many countries, especially Muslim countries people are also being told that our British Government is also supporting Bush in his determination to replace the regime of Saddam Hussain. Let me please tell you that this is not the view of the majority of the population.

In every newspaper we read

Government has decided that it will not allow people to meet in the park for that Peace Rally as it may damage the grass. This is how our Government, in a so-called free society, wants to do in order to prevent what would possibly be the largest demonstration this country has ever seen. Why, because those people will be showing Blair that a war with Iraq is not the answer. The ordinary British people do not want to be responsible for the killing of innocent children. We do not want to

be any part of Americas War or Bushes revenge.
Kathleen Huq
UK

Money laundering

I have been reading with interest the articles being published in different national dailies about the money laundering and the actions taken and being taken by our financial watchdog - Bangladesh Bank (BB).

Only a few days ago, Bangladesh Bank, axed three Managing Directors of three private commercial banks. What was their fault? They

taken against any of their inspection officials for their failures?

As per decision of the BB, the MDs who have just been fired can come back to their jobs after a period of two years. But the officers who lost their jobs 2/3 years ago are still finding it extremely difficult to get a job in another bank in the absence of any clear-cut instruction from the BB in this regard. BB may please look into the matter for the sake of their rehabilitation.

BB may consider reducing its overhead expenses by abolishing the DBI and subscribing more newspapers instead to gather information about what is happening in the Banking and Financial sectors.

Enamul Huq
Dhaka

Price hike

We are really surprised at frequently increased tariff of water by WASA. We are also astonished at the government's plan to export gas instead of fulfilling our domestic need.

control scenario. The key points is to have a clear idea about the probable scenarios of what we may face now and in the future; and have a flexible "Standard Operating Procedure" in place ready to be executed whenever needed (before or after allegation).

Bangladesh government must start an international campaign through Western media to try to tilt the negative image towards a more balanced one. But, charity starts from home, meaning that our current administration must continue on the road of democracy and openness to achieve a higher moral ground over the opposition. An independent judiciary and Bangladesh Television could be a trump card for this administration and has a tremendous political capital for many years to come. But, all planning or strategies will be futile unless all of us get together and work towards a common goal irrespective of our political affiliation.

Nafees K, USA

"Women's football"

This is in response to all the constructive criticisms that I have received over the past few days.

In response to Mr. Hassan's first point of criticism, my conclusions are not based on Hollywood movies and talk shows, rather from my own personal experiences. The other night I took one of my American elderly female friends to the hospital. She is some fifty years of age and is what is considered to be morbidly obese. Though I happen to know her only for a little while, I took her to the hospital on multiple occasions as she continues to need special treatments for various diseases that she suffers from due to being obese. Despite the fact that her one and only son (who happens to be of my age) lives here in Dallas just as I do, she feels much more comfortable to ask me for a ride to the hospital than she does to her son. To the best of my knowledge, over the past few months, her son has visited her only twice - once in Christmas and the other on Thanksgiving. One may say that this is rather an exception to the norm. I would respectfully disagree and would argue that this is more of the norm than exception.

In regard to Mr. Hassan's second point and I quote "Here, one class is not given different salary based on their nationality." I have to totally disagree with him because I strongly feel that his point is not necessarily supported by fact rather personal opinion. I happen to work for a prestigious and well-respected computer firm in the same area where Mr. Hassan resides and have been working there for over five years now. Based on my own personal experiences and that of my fellow colleagues and employees from other countries at work, I know for a fact that salary "does vary based on nationality". Otherwise, we would not see so many foreign workers coming to the U.S. to work for a much lesser salary than those of locals.

To the best of my knowledge, I never stated that Americans are less hard working or dishonest and a comparison of that nature was never made. If that were the case, then I would have left this country a very long time ago.

In conclusion, we do not need to desperately promote women's soccer to modernise our country which to me is only symbolic. There are so many other ways through which we can achieve modernism. For example, we can try and follow the very things that Mr. Hassan mentioned "honesty and hard work" to make our country more modern.

Despite of all the criticisms I drew, I respectfully stand by my original opinion.

Atif Alam, Dallas, Texas, USA

This is an answer of Mr. Atif Alam's letter (January 31).

Mr Alam who lives in the US and disagrees with women playing football in Bangladesh, went ahead in his writing to attack and criticise the moral values of the US by saying that where he lives there is lack of trust and respect for family and society. He also brought up the high rate of divorce which is 67 per cent.

Talking about mistrust, does this problem only exist in the US, in the modern world and the West? How about in the third world countries? How about in Bangladesh?

I would like to inform Mr Alam that I have been lied to and deceived countless times by people I trusted, right here in Bangladesh.

Now about the high rate of divorce, it is really a shame. But Mr Alam's problem is he is trying to relate this to modernism. It is true that in Bangladesh, you rarely hear about a divorce, but the fact is that many and many couples, but not all, are living in worse state than a divorce. Where wives are considered to be lower than men. Their only roles in the families are to make children, take care of them and watch over the housework.

Because of my work, every month I meet dozens of women who are suffering because their husbands left them, yet not divorced. These men left their women on their own, and in many cases with several children to take care of. How would you like me to relate those issues to conservatism? Mr Alam, when you last checked the high rate of divorce, did you try to check the number of cases where women got acid thrown on their faces? I assume that you rarely find such a thing where you live, in the modern that you despise.

I don't think women playing football is the issue in keeping a traditional and conservative nation. Instead the problems that need to be dealt with are the exceeding lawlessness that is practised by an enormous amount of people, the corruption that is practised by those who are in authority and supposed to protect the people, and the crimes where the criminals are openly practising their crimes, and even protected. Have you tried to make a research where you live to find out the percentage of people who are openly practising lawlessness, corruption and crimes without being brought to justice in the modern world?

Finally, I know that many Bangladeshi people who'll read my letter may feel offended. I ask for your forgiveness and I would like you to know that in no means I am writing to offend anyone but to



It's only football, not feminism!

bring to light some issues that some time we ignore or we would like to ignore. I do love Bangladesh, and I hope the best for this nation.

EI Massri, Dhaka

I am intrigued at developments in the correspondence on women's football. I had no idea that so many people in Bangladesh were open to the idea! However, in most other countries, there are many more alternatives to football by way of lively physi-

cal activity and competitive sports for girls.

If the objectors wish to protect women from the rudeness of staring men then this is admirable but

1. I doubt whether anyone who thinks that women playing football is a sexual turn-on have actually seen a match.
2. Men do not have to watch women playing football. They can stay away.

The appalling behaviour of large numbers of unaccompanied men, in the streets, on public transport and in places of work in Bangladesh is evidence of the failure of one or two generations of men who have failed to give them proper guidance, as family members, neighbours, colleagues and passers-by. Trying to reduce the number of women who get out of the house to work and play and giving the impression that those who do so should feel guilty about it - is, surely, not the solution.

Angela Robinson (Rev Mrs), The British School in Dhaka

It is unfortunate that even in the 21st century, we still think like the people of the medieval years. Whereas women in other countries have as equal participation as men, our women are still lagging behind in almost every field.

But, that does not mean that one should blame the religion Islam for this. Islam, in fact, is the first religion which gave freedom to women. It is totally unfair to see some illiterate fundamentalist group stopping women to play a soccer match and then some people blaming the religion for this.

Minhaj Ahmed, Uttara, Dhaka

I am responding to the letter of Munasir Kamal dated 29 January. I am not against playing football by our women. But it will create a ripple if it is played publicly in a small town. It should be played in women's sports complex in one of the metropolitan cities.

Two recent events, in my opinion, had been a milestone towards women's progress and empowerment- one successful entrepreneur lady has won the hotly contested Presidential Election in Dhaka Club-- traditionally a male bastion and another lady has defeated soundly the BNP candidate to become the chair person of Narayanganj Municipality! My hats off to these ladies and wish them all the success.

Sakhawat Hossain, Gulshan, Dhaka