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PHOTO: AFP

Shipping Minister's comment

The other day BBC in their "Asia Today" programme tele-vised a documentary on our recent lunch tragedy. The report regretted over the many lapses in our operations and administrations. Tragedies keep on happening but without any remedial actions or preventable measures. Basic requirements like passenger manifest, life safety equip-ment's, route navigation facilities, coast guards and radio communications etc are non-existent in these days of tech-nological advancement. Overloading was pinpointed by the reporter as the prime cause of the frequent accidents. He also lamented that over such a human tragedy neither the Prime minister nor the opposition leader of the country and not even anyone from the concern Ministry visited the site and dead bodies. Our Shipping Minister Col. Retd. Akbar Hossen was interviewed by the reporter. To my hor-ror, his reply to the cause of the accident was, "I did not create this". Then again he uttered "I want to solve the

problem" in reply to what measures he would propose to stop its recurrence. I felt very ashamed of myself after watching the programme particularly the way the Shipping Minister replied. How could he be so blunt to reply in such discourteous manner? Does he not know that as a Shipping Minister it is his sole responsibility to put the administration in order and it is he who should be held responsible for not being vigilant. Lunch tragedy is not a new incident in Ban-gladesh. But Government after Government remains immune to the human tragedies. They should find out ways and means in collaboration with the lunch owners and solve this national tragedy in a democratic manner, if need be by seeking foreign assistance. I can only say Marhaba to his comments. What a genius the country has been gifted with!

A. Zakaria Mirpur, Dhaka

1996 and 1997(examination held in 2000 and 2001 respectively) could be decided in 2002 in the 34th and 44th meeting of the Academic Council held on 3-4-2002 and 15-9-2003 respectively without any initiative taken by the Principals of the colleges, the fate of the improvement examinees could easily be decided by the NU on their own initiative on the basis of the records available at their disposal. It would be a sheer injustice to these examinees if they are deprived of the facility of pick-up since they have appeared under the same Traditional Honours syllabus of the Dhaka, Rajshahi and Chittagong Universities like the Improvement examinees of 1996 and 1997. From a rough estimate the total number of improvement examinees of 1994 and 1995 would come to not less than one thousand if each of one hundred Honours level colleges has at least five examinees. The NU would do a great humanitarian service if the fates of these innocent deprived examinees were decided without further loss of time. These victim examinees should not be let alone to meet their problems individu-ally which entails physical, mental and financial sufferings at the hands of some unscrupulous, dishonest and ill-motivated members of the official staff of the NU

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Bangladesh Bank High School

I read the letter of Mr. Khademul Islam in DS and felt sorry for the poor condition of the Bangladesh Bank High School. I was an Ex-student of the Bank School and passed SSC from there. That time the Bank School was very renowned in the Motijheel area. It was as good as the Motijheel Ideal School. I got my higher degrees from UK and the contribution of the Bank School is undeniable in my educational suc-cess. Back then our Head Mistress was Mrs. Motomaz Begum, and I remember that she was competent and as well as qualified, we (all the Ex-students) who passed before 1984 never really forgotten her. When she left this school it gradually became poorer. In 1999 when I visited Bangladesh, I went to the Bank Colony and there I heard that the Bank School isn't as good as it was. And when I came to know that 47 students failed in the SSC exam in 2003, I was shocked. School life is probably the most pleasant, carefree time of every person. So I have never forgotten the Bank School which was the beginning of my educational life. But the letters on the Bank School really made me sad.

I want to say to the Bangladesh Bank authority that they are taking many steps to reform the banking sector and I support that. But, they should also take proper steps for the improvement of the Bangladesh Bank High School for the benefit of their own children. SM Kollol London, UK

North Korea and nuclear weapons

This refers to the letter "Nuclear is more than just a weapon," by Azad Miah (DS August 16). Azad Miah makes the common mistake when he says: "It seems that, nuclear is a Green Card to prosperity, respect, power, recogni-tion and endless other things. Nuclear is a magic wand that waive's all your misdeeds and sins for you." If this is the case, Pakistan would not be a basket case, dependent on the generosity of the Americans. Despite its nuclear weapons, Paki-stan remains a impoverished nation and its dependence on the foreign aid (read American aid) remains as great as ever. In fact, Pakistan is so much dependent on the American aid and investment that it is at the

Start building

At the end of the Afghan war, the world promised it billions of dollars of aid. Those big figures, along with the names of those big countries were paraded in front of our TV screen, complete with all the usual charts and graphs. That was of course when the whole world was watching the war and certain TV channel's viewing rate went over the roof. Now however, it is a different story. Afghan stories have taken the back seat and so is the talk of billions of dollars of aid. Out of all those countries who promised, some Muslim countries have already given a big portion of their promised amount but other rich countries, including US, are now trying to forget. Why? Well, there are couple of reasons and for a start, why should anyone pour billions of their hard earned dollars to develop a country that is absolutely useless to them? Why develop a country with your own money, make it a self-sustaining industrial competitor to your country, when it is far better to have that country buy and beg things from you? Afghanistan is a Muslim majority country and if dollars ever come, they will contain lots of strings. But the main reason why those promised billions are not coming is probably because Afghanistan has no oil fields. The situation in Afghanistan is getting worse and unfortunately, it will continue. The situation in Iraq will also be the same. Even though it has lots of oil fields and in the future Iraqi people might be able to elect some MPs or Ministers of their choice, but the "Head" will always be democratically elected by his holy oilness, his self-declared goodness, his global-politeness, his tough stances, his gun-blazing cowboyism, our beloved Uncle Sam! Iraq will improve up to the standard of some Asian countries e.g. Pakistan or perhaps even -- we are pushing here (!) -- up to certain Arab countries. But it will not be a major Muslim player no matter how much oil it has. After making some progress, it will stop and the typical pattern of Asian and Arab countries will emerge. Iraq will be just another country, nothing special. And that is the biggest problem.

There is another group of countries where democracy exists, but only in letter-headings and in the glossy pages of their pass-ports. In reality, countries like Ban-gladesh, Pakistan, USA are not democratic countries. Only those who have lots of money, lots of muscle-power and leaders who are arrogant enough to murder people win elections in these countries. And to use money and muscle effectively, you need brain-power, which I believe the politicians have! As for our own country we can ask for some amount of help from other countries and as always, there will be some big brothers trying to take care of us. But until we resolve our own problems, we develop our countries, we wipe out those terrorists and until we clean up our own backyards, we will continue to get rotten deals. There is absolutely no other way of solving the crisis many Muslim coun-tries face today. Some clever peo-ple can try lots of regime change, bombed-democracy, "shock-and-awe" freedom, plane hijacking, oil-selling friendship, relationship and many other honkey-donkey ideas; but the best way to bring peace and prosperity in our countries, is to give our people what they want and be able to solve our own problems. Azad Miah, Oldham, UK



An Afghan story

PHOTO: AFP

No need for police on DU campus

Dhaka University is the hub of student politics in our country. Through history, pre or after libera-tion war, the students of this institu-tion led all movements relating to their own academic demands and on national issues, eventually they achieved their demands and con-tributed the nation. But this historic delineation is no longer seen today. The campus situation has turned unstable and it is more than a decade that we always see a large number of police on the campus. And they deployed to keep its situa-tion stable and agreeable for stud-ents. But what are we getting from the police? They always pass their time sitting, taking rest and gossiping among their own under trees in front of Madhu's canteen all day long. I think they are given salary without doing any works. Police did not protect the general students, includ-ing Chhatra League and other students' organisations, while cadres of Chhatra Dal attacked before their eyes. Moreover, the police back the cadres attacking on rival groups, they took actions against the organisations of govern-ment. Both police and cadres jointly attacked them. So the role of police is partially and sometimes, totally biased. Police undoubtedly disap-pointed the general students. "Might is right" is precisely being applied on the DU campus and its dormitories. One who have power, can apply it illegally on the powerless it is the rule here. The role of police is zero. Rather police often indirectly encourage cadres to oppress the

members of anti-government stu-dents' organisations and other students. After all these, I really find no coherent reason of deploying police in the campus. I hope that the govern-ment will deploy police in more crime prone areas of Bangladesh in stead of Dhaka University campus. Palash Podder Department of Sociology, Jagannath Hall, DU

The most savage war for peace

The US move to uproot terrorism from the world is perhaps one of the most terrorist move the world has ever seen. Such act of power demon-stration by the US is not new. Since the establishment of US, it has intervened in the internal affairs of Latin America and the Caribbean on more than two hundred occa-sions. Almost thirty years ago US top-pled Guatemala's constitutional government just because the later had dared to expropriate the unlaw-ful property of the United Fruit Company, which traded in bananas. Guatemala has since become a veritable prison. Ten years ago US engineered the constitutional down-fall of Chile just because it did not suit the White House and the monopolies. Now how do the third world country react to the gangster attack of the world's number one super-power. There was a time when the world was divided politically between two super powers. One capitalist, and the other communist. In other words, the US block and the Soviet block.

The US had to think twice before taking any step. After the US block succeeded to break down Soviet Union into pieces it appears that the US government has become desper-ate in their actions of fixing up any body or any country that speaks against them. Any unbiased person can clearly see that for the present US administration freedom, democ-racy and human rights end where the people and the governments dis-agrees to any proposals or advises given by the US govern-ment. What happened in Afghanis-tan was the same. In the name of searching Bin Laden the US bombed the Afghan land killing indiscriminately innocent children, women and the old people along with their target groups. Nobody, I believe encourages terrorism and the terrorists are always hunted down but the big question remains as to how we define terrorism. The same thing happened in 1983 when US attacked Granada. A Swedish doctor named Margarita Andrea, who was in Grenada in the first days of US intervention, told the Stock-holm-based newspaper Aftonbladet: We could see from our shelters US aircraft's swooping down in the area of kindergarten schools taking life of 17 children and 47 adults. They also bombed hospi-tals where as many as 130 patients died. That was when the Reagan government who had to face a question at the White House press conference, that day of the invasion: Do you think that the US has the right to invade another country to change its government? The question remains unanswered even today.

Reagan attacked Granada because they opened up embassies for the socialist block and they felt that if the socialist blocks become powerful then it will be a threat to the American people living in Granada. In the Reagan's regime the target group was the socialist block and that was somehow destroyed; and in the Bush's administration the target group is the Muslim world; widely known as the Arab world. After attacking Afghanistan their target was to attack Iraq. Mohammad Rafiqul Islam Dhaka

Improvement examinees

I have gone through the letter of M. Sadeq published in DS on August 4, under the above caption. I agree that the principals of the Honours level colleges should have taken initiatives to submit list of the improvement examinees of 1994 and 1995 subject-wise and year-wise in the interest of their students; this would have made the National University feel the urgency about prompt disposal of the issue; but I fail to understand why the NU should deprive hundreds of improve-ment examinees of their legitimate claim of the pick-up facility on the lame excuse of lapses on the part of the principals of the concerned colleges. Since detail particulars of all the improvement examinees of the years referred to above are available with the NU, they can easily solve the problem without waiting for the particulars to be supplied by the principals of the colleges. Moreover, since the fate of the improvement examinees of

Student politics: Time to rein in



PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

With a glorious past and effective influence on national politics, student politics carries a big appeal to all of us. We are still reminiscent of those days when students fought for language movement, congregated to drive out the yoke of oppression and tyranny of the then Paki-stani government and dedicated themselves for our independ-ence. Still student politics calls up those days when students marched forward to oust the autocratic and military occupa-tion of power and helped the nation to get back to its real ideological governmental system of democracy. The emotion, enthusiasm and passion worked with student politics in past and its contribution to national politics were so fasci-nating and massive that our feelings of gratitude towards student politics has not trailed off yet in spite of rising our annoyance and hatred to the same from time to time.

But, what we have recently observed inside and outside of Dhaka University premises in the name of student politics, has forced us to give a second thought on it. It is certain that nowhere in the world, the existence of student politics of our nature is established. Of course, they do rally the protest against any sort of barbarity, unjust or conspiracy, but it is not for the petty interest of any particular political parties, rather, it is an outburst of what they really feel to do as "human beings". But, our student politicians are now-a-days devoid of this feeling and the character they expose at the period of excitement recollects us that they have not been able to bury the animal function in human beings. The deterioration we have been noticing in student politics now-a-days, has happened due to the direct and conspicuous connivance of the leaders of fundamental branch. The main

motive behind using students in politics to capture the university halls, establish the dominance of particular political ideologies through using the muscle power of students and thus, to get some benefits. When a political party advise the members of its political wing to gain control over particular institutions through whatever means instead of request them to concentrate on studies, then the main objective of that political party is under-stood. In fifties and sixties, student-cum-politicians ran after an ideology, thought of the nation and came into one stage when it was the national neces-sity, but now, student politicians commit themselves totally for the party instead of nation plus no respect to ideological vision. This selfishness has made the student politics added like an egg and if this pattern continues, the future of student politics is really bleak. The main and fundamental

crisis in student politics now is the shortage of meritocracy. Now, those could become frontliner in student politics who have muscle power to exhibit, can create panic in student's minds, have the experience of shooting and will remain ready to do some dirties for the party's sake, in lieu of who are good students, have vision and ora-tory, stick by an ideology, have better communication skill with students and common people and dedication. This zero presence of meritocracy has misled the student politics and opportunistic leaders of main political organisation have been successful to use the student politicians as pawn. Politics is not as easy word as easily we pronounce it. The mentality of present student leaders is completely changed if compared to the same of student leaders of fifties and sixties. When mundane demand overplays the morality

and ideology, then the fall of human being is expedited. And in politics, deviation from ideol-ogy is a big downfall. Because, this corrupts a mind and a cor-rupt mind can do anything. With a feeling of cynicism, we are to say that the mentality of our student leaders are heavily contaminated and they do not feel any compunction. They do politics without any vision, any philosophy or any idealistic ground. Sometime I think, if we ask them what politics is or what the political belief they belong to, they will not be able to answer it quite clearly. This is the level of degradation, student politics has reached. Without no immediate remedial attempt, it will be running toward complete ruin. Sulav Barua Criminal Justice and Criminology, Middlesex university, London, UK