

## New Industrial Policy

Tuesday's meeting between cabinet ministers, including the prime minister, and representatives of various chambers of commerce, and trade and industrial associations, was a welcome one, which should help to iron out problems arising out of a number of government actions in the recent past. The prime minister assured the country's leaders of trade and industry that the government would take appropriate measures to tackle problems faced by the private sector.

This development should instill a greater degree of confidence into business circles than has been the case in recent days. With economic development the priority, and rapid industrialisation the core issue facing the country, it is vital that relations between the government and the private sector be put on a footing of greater co-operation.

The 1991 Industrial Policy announced by the minister for industry on Monday, points to a strategy of private-sector led growth for the economy, and it is this fact which gives the meeting between the government and the chambers its crucial importance.

However, policies are all very fine, but the main point is implementation. There is an adage in economic parlance that a badly implemented good policy is worse than a bad policy. The government has to ensure such will not be the fate of its industrial policy.

In order to achieve the kind of transformation envisaged by the government, planners need to take a close look at our existing industrial units, 40 per cent of which is currently lying idle. No developing country can afford to have such a massive percentage of its industrial capacity unutilised and still hope for growth. To revive industries that are currently labeled as sick, and reopen those that have been closed down are now the first priorities of the government. Two issues are related to this.

Without restoring the health — and therefore confidence — of existing units, the idea of attracting further investment may remain a pipedream. On the other hand, optimum utilisation of capacity cannot be given impetus to further growth, as increased productivity will stimulate demand which in turn will create the necessary conditions for market expansion.

Secondly, the continuing policy of disinvestment, which has to be implemented with the utmost care, may run into serious difficulties unless state-owned enterprises are streamlined and made more efficient. It is difficult to see how the private sector could be induced to invest good money in enterprises that are chronically sick.

The emphasis laid on foreign investment, while being a realistic one, is not totally without question marks. The decision to allow foreign companies to have 100 per cent holding in investments anywhere in the country may have the desired effect of providing greater incentives only if certain other conditions are met first.

At present, the domestic labour force suffers from a twin disadvantage over its regional competitors in low skill and low rate of productivity. Labour in Bangladesh may be cheap in terms of basic salary, but low productivity due to industrial unrest, absenteeism, and other factors make cost per unit rather high and often internationally uncompetitive. A well-thought-out labour policy could help overcome this problem. Otherwise, response from foreign investors may not be as positive as we hope.

The question of credit, however, needs a thorough re-think. The 1991 policy, on World Bank advice, has made industrial credit subject to market rate of interest. This is likely to immediately increase the debt-servicing burden of investors, which may even force some enterprises to close altogether. While we hope the government will revise this policy in the greater national interest, and fix a single-figure rate for industrial borrowings, we also hope the stifling bureaucracy involved in obtaining credit at present will be cut down to enable a greater number of entrepreneurs to borrow and enter the market.

## Rent Leaps to Shame Bubka

There has been an accretion of 21 per cent in the average house rent in the metropolis over the past one year. This is according to the latest findings of the Consumers' Association of Bangladesh. The CAB report has been particularly revealing in that it shows not all classes of housing have manifested the same forbidding increase. Rooms in the bustees, one-room attics and such other incommensurate spaces either in the gutters or in odd corners of multi-storied mansions have recorded a rise of between 25 and 32 per cent over the same period. Three-roomed apartments and accommodations even larger now demand a rent higher than that received a year back by about 10 per cent at the most. Plainly — a three-room tenant now would have to pay 500 taka more for his 5000-taka flat. Whereas, the two-roomed 3000-taka tenant will be asked to part with some 630 taka more every month till the next hike comes at the end of the month-cycle.

This fantastic and altogether irrational and anomalous rise in house rent is not, however, the most distinguishing feature of our glorious city. Far from it. In this poor capital city of the poorest country — why call it one of the poorest, does that diminish the shame? — we pay the highest house-rent in the world in terms of the income-rent ratio. No one renting a piece of accommodation can do without committing 50 per cent and above of his income to house rent. It is not infrequent that 70 to 80 per cent of income may go to house-rent. Cases are too numerous of people paying more than their regular income for the house of their choice and resorting to all kinds of vile *dhandabaji* to defray other costs of living. In a nation where the highest salary given by government is Tk 6000, thousands live in houses and flats charging anything between Tk 10,000 and ten times that.

The phenomenon is indeed two-faced. The honest ten-thousand-taka man or the 1500-taka one paying Tk 6000 and Tk 900 respectively in house rent and making do with the remainder in a so-called hand-to-mouth fashion — is one aspect. The University teacher — a five-thousand man — choosing to live in a rented house eating Tk 10,000 a month is another aspect of the phenomenon. No doubt there would be many in the Gulshan-Banani-DOHS high-rent; housing satellite who are no different from the second case. But both of these aspects have most happily joined to bring forth one of the eeriest and most unrealistic rent situation in the world seeking of corruption and greed in the way.

## THOUGHTS ON DHAKA UNIVERSITY PROBLEMS

# Agreement Needed to Prohibit Violence

by Dr A T R Rahman

This article, written before the closure of Dhaka University sine die on Tuesday, is a commentary on the "Conversation" between the Vice-Chancellor Dr Maniruzzaman Mia and The Daily Star team published on July 21.

THE deteriorating situation through which the Dhaka University has been passing through and the likelihood of further slide in the premier institution pains us all. The issues are complex and some are deep rooted. Being a former student and teacher of this University, I feel deeply concerned and would like to make comments on some of the issues, particularly, campus environment, role and programmes, financing, and employment of university graduates.

Our academic environment is vitiated by campus violence and related political activities and as a result instructional and research work is severely dislocated. To remedy the situation, there must be consensual agreement among the leading political parties to prohibit the use of all forms of violence in student politics and disassociate fully from any student fronts who use violence.

Our students deserve commendation for playing their historical role in national politics in times of crisis for expressing popular opinion and articulating public interest. It is sad and unfortunate that in the process student politics could not be delinked from national politics, but became entangled and the form and level of violence expanded during last three decades. Hand pushing of fifties have become the gun battle of nineties. The impact of this type and level of violence has had negative influence on all key aspects generating uncertainty and fear of life on the campus, dislocating academic schedules (session jams), lowering quality of education as instruction and guidance cannot be properly planned and carried out, and

reflecting employment pattern of students in the vast number of unemployed and unemployable graduates and begetting not so rational aspirations of leaders and workers of student fronts.

I welcome the initiative taken by the Prime Minister in achieving political consensus in restoring peaceful campus environment. But the Vice-Chancellor's comments that these steps are only a beginning and that hard decisions by key political parties will be needed are very appropriate. Given the intensity and coverage of linkage between student fronts and political parties, we fully realize how difficult, and may be politically costly in the short run it will be for key political parties to make these hard decisions. But we sincerely hope that political parties realize that general public, general student community (the silent majority) and above all the long term national interest would favour restoration of campus peace without delay. Because, continuation of violence would not only inhibit the development and maturation of democratic political process but even interrupt it as it happened in the past.

### Role and Programme

It was a bit surprising to note that the debate about the role of the University includes two shades of opinion — one favouring University to focus on producing cultured men and women and another seeking to make University education relevant to the needs of

society. This type of debate has long been sterile and irrelevant as hardly any state funded or even private university in the world can afford to focus exclusively on preparing cultured persons. It has to respond to societal needs and develop in its students directly marketable skills.

It has to be a dynamic institution providing opportunity for education and training for young persons as well as necessary research facilities for its staff, bearing in mind the socio-economic and philosophical needs of the society. Any university which finds its large number of graduates unemployed must examine the quality of instruction and the relevance of its programmes of instruction to the needs of the outside world and make necessary adjustments accordingly. There is no reason why a university cannot offer liberal education as well as prepare students for law, medicine, engineering, computer, management and similar professional and semi-professional activities.

Reference was made in the "conversation" that the role of a university should be different in a developing country like Bangladesh than from a developed country. Although the differences in the nature and scope of higher education in various countries are increasingly narrowed down, the role of university and other institutions providing higher education/or professional training has distinctive characteristics in each country. I do not know

which developed country the Vice-Chancellor had in mind when making his point but in the country I know well, i.e. USA, the role of university is comprehensive and fully responsive to the needs of society. The best of American Universities including those in the Ivy League (e.g. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Cornell etc.) offer programmes in academic, professional, semi-professional and technical areas. The Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, School of Public Health in Princeton, the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell are all leading institutions in their respective fields. The role of universities in both developed and developing countries is essentially same and in the developing countries, their role has to be more practically oriented with increasing scope for preparing students either for employment in public and private sectors or to be self-employed.

### Financing

Financing higher education and its mobilization and management of finance is a major responsibility for any university administration. The sole dependence of a university on government resources for its operation and capital development is neither healthy nor appropriate. It is not healthy for any autonomous social institution to depend solely on one source of revenue, especially the government, because the claims on government resources are many, diverse and

ever-increasing. It is neither appropriate because, higher education commands high respect and has great demand in our society. Hence higher educational institutions should be in a position to attract resource from various sources e.g. alumni, industry and trade, philanthropist and tuition fees.

It is necessary that Dhaka University should explore to reduce its dependence on government resources by developing other sources of funding and improve its financial management. The fees and other charges should be considered as an important source of funding. A university should set that a certain percentage of its operational expenses (say, between 1/2 and 1/4) should be covered from fees and charges and these should be adjusted periodically with the rate of inflation. It is almost unthinkable how a university in 1991 can charge the same fee as it charged in 1921 when it started operation. One wonders about the rationale for it. If the founders of the Dhaka University fixed the fee in 1921, should not the fee have been adjusted now according to the inflation and value of money?

Any university has both operating expenses for current programmes and development expenses for new or experimental programmes/projects. Total operating expenses can be expressed as a cost of instruction per student and this cost can be shared between two key sources, i.e. fees and

charges and government grant. The proportion between what a student and his/her parents will be required to pay and what government can pay may be fixed and adjusted periodically. Many students and their guardians will be able to pay full tuition as evident from fact that large number of school and college level students of Bangladesh are studying abroad. The question arises how about the poor students who are unable to pay some or all of their charges and fees. Arrangement should be made for scholarship and stipend for this purpose. A university should actively work to develop and diversify the scholarship and stipend fund.

It can solicit one-time grant from various donors and its alumni, yearly grant to the fund from the government, industry, business and philanthropists. Private business and industries should be encouraged to provide education grant to their employees, especially for higher education of their dependents.

A university also requires development budget for new buildings, equipment and facilities as well as for experimental or new instructional and training programmes. Here again sources can be diversified, primarily depending on government, alumni, trade and industry, and foreign donors. Initial cost of starting instructional programmes directly beneficial to corporate sector such as computer, business, management, information system etc. should be obtained as grant or full tuition cost from the beneficiaries.

(To be concluded tomorrow)

The writer is a former teacher of Dhaka University

# Swaziland Introduces News Management

Norman Sowerby writes from Mbabane

Moves to introduce news management in the tiny African kingdom have journalists up in arms, coming as they do so soon after a Unesco seminar in Namibia, at which African journalists called on the United Nations to "outlaw" censorship. The Swazi government stoutly denies that it is hobbling press freedoms.

SENSITIVITY about press freedom has hit the headlines in Swaziland after the introduction of a system of government news management. Journalists are calling it censorship while the authorities describe it as an attempt to prevent misrepresentation of the facts.

The moves had been in the air for some time, according to media observers, but the official announcement came late in June from civil service chief Alpheus Shabangu, who is also secretary to the Cabinet.

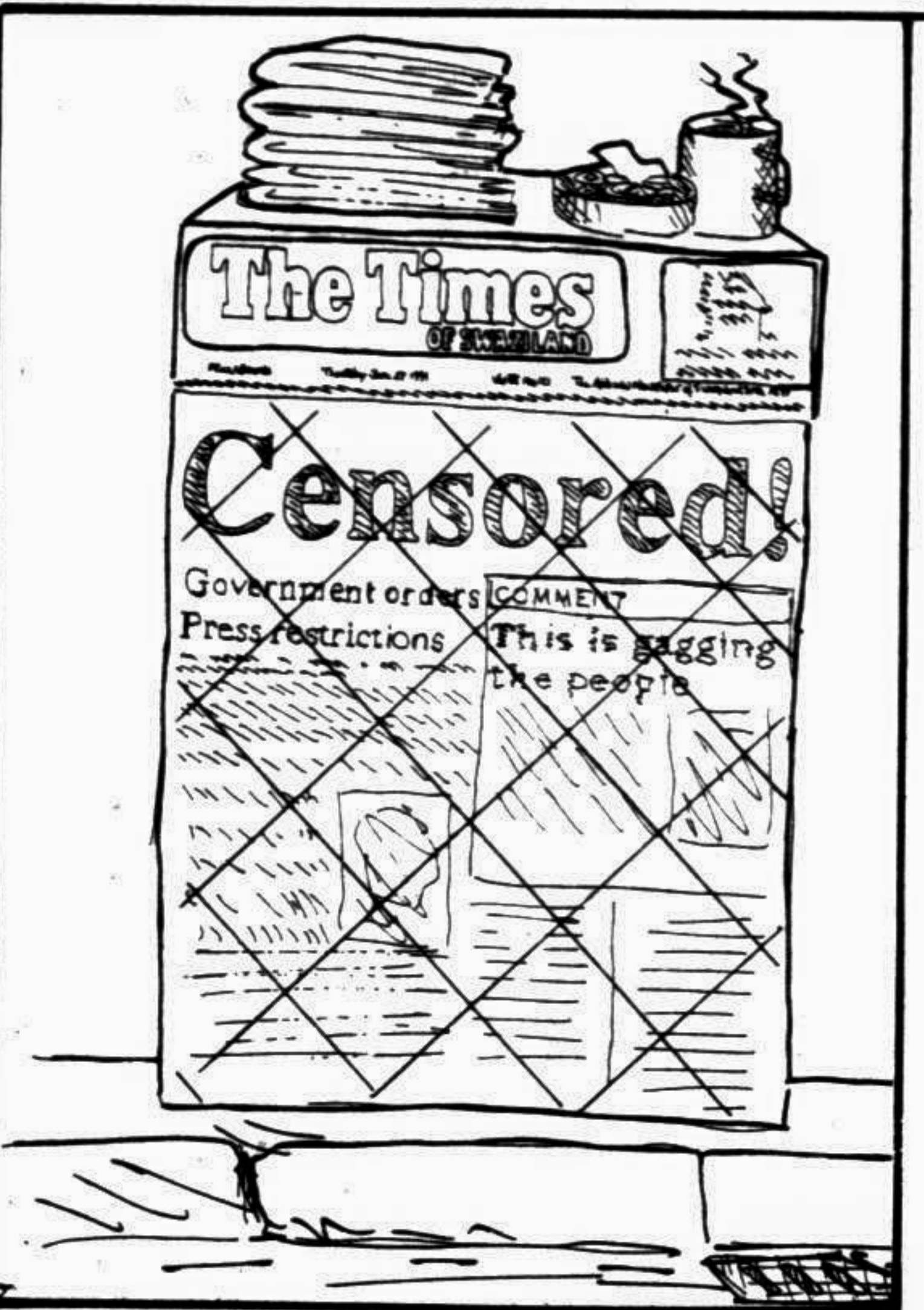
Shabangu called together editors of the two daily newspapers and the television station to announce the formation of a committee for co-ordination of government information — an eight-member group which includes senior policemen and civil servants.

He explained that in future all inquiries for government departments will be submitted by journalists to one man, the director of information, Abner Tembe. Tembe will then pass on the inquiries to the relevant department, which in turn will relay its answer, in writing, back through Tembe, to the journalist.

The director of information will have the right to reject questions, or to edit answers to conform with government policy, explained the civil service chief.

He said that the system was not new in Swaziland, and was authorised under legislation which has existed since before independence. Shabangu said the aim was to avoid misrepresentations "because of the unprofessional manner in which government information has been disseminated to the press."

Reaction to the announcement by one local newspaper,



the privately-owned Times of Swaziland, was thunderous. Under a one-word banner headline: "Censored" it said the

legislation was "gagging the people" and compared the system to the ministry of Truth in George Orwell's novel 1984.

It said a blanket of censorship had now been introduced to protect civil servants from press probing into corruption, laziness, inefficiency and neglect.

The government had wrenched back the clock, said the Times, by enforcing legislation introduced by British colonialists more than 20 years ago.

The daily Observer newspaper commented on the apparent misunderstanding of the role of the media. It said: "We work on deadlines, we work under adverse conditions to get the truth. Instead of acknowledging the work done by the media, we see a sledgehammer descending on us. That is a pity, it makes the work of a journalist more complicated and difficult."

Civil service chief Shabangu expressed surprise at the vehement criticism. He said: "The allegation (of censorship) by the Times is quite unfortunate, since it is creating a cloud that does not exist. The procedure is meant to improve the flow of accurate information to the press, and the system is applied by different governments and organisations all over the world."

Even prime minister Obed Dlamini was dragged into the controversy. Interviewed by the Swazi Observer newspaper he said: "I am clear on one thing: freedom of the press is in no doubt in this country."

This is shown by the liberty you enjoy in saying exactly what you have directed to me by way of questions."

Despite this top-level reassurance, the muttering continues.

A spokeswoman for Swaziland's National Association of Journalists said: "As a national association we demand clarification to enable us to respond to inquiries from international press organisations we are affiliated to. If it is true that a committee has been established to oversee daily operations of the press, we feel it is too centralised, and we totally object to its existence." The association suggested that each government department should have its own spokesman to deal with the press, a system already used by the Royal Swaziland Police.

Swaziland's National Association of Teachers, the most powerful union in the country, also chipped in. Secretary-general Maduduze Zwane said that with the legislation government was "deliberately denying and hiding its operation from the people it leads. If it is a government of the people, the people must be fully aware of its operations." He called for a revision of "this disheartening process."

Newspaper readers who disapprove of the new system also note an accidentally unfortunate timing of its announcement.

ment, just hours before United States ambassador to Swaziland, Stephen Rogers, gave an address on US foreign policy in Africa.

Roger said that in thinking about aid his country looks at the records of African states in ensuring security of property, the rule of law and open government procedures. He added: "Like other aid donors, we will increasingly consider democratisation and human rights as we plan our aid expenditures. This is a necessary underpinning to economic development. The people demand it. And we believe it is right."

Swaziland, the ambassador said, is in many respects a model of what the United States would like to see elsewhere on the continent, but critics of the new information dissemination system suggested that it did not conform to the US model.

The Times of Swaziland continued its campaign against the system by publishing a list of queries it presented to the director of information, in writing, as required, and by pointing out daily which queries had not been answered.

In the month since the legislation has been in force, the controlling committee and the media are still learning to live with it. Some kind of modification does seem to be on the cards, however, mainly to relieve the man in the hot seat, director of information Abner Tembe.

As one veteran reporter put it: "There's no way that one man can be expected to handle the number of queries a journalist has to make in one day, and meet deadlines."

— GEMINI NEWS

## To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

### DU from the inside

Sir, Thank you for Star's series of topical "Conversations" with relevant personalities spotlighting public attention on hot issues. The VC DU provided a lot of information (Star, July 21) about the administration of the University not generally known to the outsiders. Such reporting provides better understanding and perspective and builds up informed public opinion.

In developing societies, the usual expectation is to grab more the money's worth; or, in other words, the illusion of getting more output than input, which is theoretically impossible, as no system works at 100 per cent efficiency. The average or standard system loss has to be taken into ac-

count. It was interesting to read that the fees at DU had not been raised for decades, notwithstanding the depreciated value of the currency and the increase in the cost of living. It was even more interesting to learn that a simple proposal such as "replace your own electric bulb" in lieu of increase in seat rent was considered a sensitive issue. There is a saying that you get what you pay for, but in this country even this maxim cannot be applied, without upsetting the apple cart. Life is full of "politics", and even the poor are not exempted (they are exploited — by whom you know).

This sensitivity to politics in everyday life is an established phenomenon in the de-

veloping countries. It is the bane and lure of politics, like water to a thirsty person in the desert. It will take generations to desensitize this (fatal) attraction.

The students at tertiary level should know what they are doing, and what is right and wrong, and are expected to respond favourably to reasonable proposals or situations. With this assumption it is difficult to grasp the continued dominance of violence on the campus; and that too conducted or controlled by a very small mixed group of insiders and outsiders. Since even the VC has vented his helplessness, it is high time for the national leaders to arrive at a 'real' consensus.

The passivity of the Parliament is simply astounding; and perhaps provides a clue as to where the cat is hiding (unless a blind man is looking for a black cat in a dark room). But the question is: who is going to bell the cat?

A MALOZ DHAKA

### Stop campus politics

Sir, The campus is a place where students are supposed to acquire knowledge in different disciplines. Politics as a subject may well be learnt but should not be practised there.

A teacher, specially a varsity teacher deserves respect from all. He is rather the most honorable person in the society. He should not be a man of a particular group or party. His "free thinking" should not be confined to a particular section of people or any vested quarter. His responsibilities are many. He is supposed not only to teach the students but also write books and articles out of his thoughts and experiences in the subject concerned. He is the right man for new discoveries and inventions. And it is obvious that if an honorable teacher is particular to his class-routine, home-work, including seeing of answer scripts and research and experiment duty, he cannot have time to exercise politics. As such his involvement in party politics must hamper his prime duties and neutrality. Similarly a student should

also refrain from party politics on the campus. He is too young and has not yet taken the responsibilities of family on his shoulders and hence has little experience of practical life.

Before exercising party politics he is supposed to acquire knowledge of the subject and learn the pros and cons of the party concerned. He should also learn to have patience and tolerance and possess some respect and honour for the others. The students are the future leaders of the nation and not 'tails' of so-called political parties. They should know that the educational institutions are the places of learning and not that of exhibition or demonstration (of arms and party strength).

A student with a particular principle or ethics cannot get proper justice and help from a teacher with a different principle and hence both the teachers and students should refrain from party-politics in their own interest — to avoid terrorism and arms battle on the campus.

However, if a teacher or a

student deemed himself more worthy for politics he should leave the campus and join the party politics out there to the relief of the other campus-dwellers and their guardians.

A Guardian, Jessore.

### ICB dividend

Sir, Investment Corporation of Bangladesh normally invests money of ICB Unit Fund certificate holders in good blue chip shares, debentures etc, etc.

Unfortunately ICB authority has invested in some bad companies who have failed miserably during the last 3-4 years consecutively to declare dividend. On the other hand ICB had invited tenders for printing dividend warrant of 90-91 to be declared on 31st July '91. Thus it is evident that dividend will not be ready before Nov-Dec as happened in the past!

Sadik Alee Maghboozar, Dhaka.