

Wake-up Call

We all had our suspicion. Only a survey-based study was needed to confirm it as knowledge. Blood donation and testing centres are the most vulnerable and dangerous sources for the spread of the HIV virus.

And this is largely due to the unsatisfactory level of knowledge of the technical personnel including the medical professionals about routes of transmission of not only the AIDS virus but also diseases transmittable through unsafe blood handling and unscreened blood transfusion, claimed a report of a recent study carried by Population Council, an international health research organisation.

Some of the findings are so appalling for the sheer departure from the basics of medical science. In some cases, pathological personnel, some of whom are qualified doctors, admitted to having the habit of simply throwing the disposable syringes in the trash cans after use. The necessity of incinerating or at least boiling them before disposing them never dawned on them.

Perhaps the most alarming condition reigns in the blood banks. There is hardly any system for screening the blood of the professional donors for the possible presence of HIV or other transmittable diseases. Ideally, this area of health care should have had the reputation of being absolutely fool-proof. Because those who donate blood professionally are underprivileged and needy members of the society. The possibility of harmful presences in their blood are far higher than in others.

Not only that. There is a short supply of kits and gears so vital for safe screening or test by the technicians. But no handicap is probably greater than ignorance or as it is in most cases, indifference.

We deem this report as a timely wake-up call. For, not only are we lacking in our vigilance against the possible outbreak of AIDS as an epidemic, the detection system, pathological side to be precise, is also seriously flawed. Except for one or two centres there is no guarantee that the pathological test reports of any two centres would be the same.

We would expect the health ministry to pay heed to these revelations and instead of spending energy in refuting the findings or diluting the spirit of condemnation, busy itself improving the situation.

Savagery at Daserkandi

No sane man can condone what happened at village Daserkandi on Saturday night. Thousands of villagers fell on a party of suspected cattle-lifters and battered six of them to death. Wasn't there any in that mob of about three thousand who would ask his fellow people to stop short of medieval lynching and pogrom? Apparently, there wasn't. We cannot push our society into a situation where thousands together take leave of sanity and the voice of reason and compassion ceases to ring out in time. You just take out the lynching part and the Daserkandi people's vigil and organised preparation and electrifying response to the raid by cattle thieves would seem simply heroic and ideally congenial to transforming the whole society into a power healing itself of criminal predispositions. But the fact of six lynched men is not something one can forget.

In a raid very similar to Saturday night's, cattle-lifters had stolen and driven away 14 cows on May 17 from the same village. This time they counted on the villagers being selfishly uncaring of the earlier attack in which only two farmers had lost cattle. No sooner had they cut the leashes of only eight cows from one man's house, alarm was raised and broadcast through the loudspeakers of the mosques. Perhaps all able-bodied men of the village came out to teach the cattle-lifters a lesson. But why at the planning and motivation stage didn't the good villagers tell one another that they were not to kill unless in self-defence? The revolting nature of the crime perpetrated to stop crime betrays the ordinary farmer's intensity of hatred towards cow-thieves. This had on many previous occasions found expression in gouging out the eyes of the thieves. This hatred has been stoked this time by the joining of the interests of some cow traders. A cow fetches anything between 30 and 50 thousand taka and when tens of them are taken away, all is ruined for either a farmer or a trader. This we mention not to minimise the wrong of the slaughter but to make a very cogent point.

While unremitting social development would tend to obviate the need for men to become a mob over a bigger timeframe, we appeal to government to ensure a Bangladesh of secured livestock.

Welcome Inductions

Two thousand more doctors are going to be inducted into government service in order to ease the manning problem of the government hospitals, health complexes and other set-ups. In all there will be three thousand new posts, a thousand of which will be filled by promotion from in-service physicians — which should lead to better performance by the benefited ones. No less important and gratifying is the news that together with that some four thousand new nurses will be recruited.

The good tidings, as published in a Bengali national daily, do not, however, give any deadline for completing these appointments. Let us believe that this would form part of what the AL government would like to flaunt as its achievements in the second year of its dispensation. And achievement will it be indeed. In a nation having a shameful doctor-to-population ratio the government facilities have been running short of doctors, making the situation worse. Fifteen hundred posts of government doctor have been lying vacant. Filling these up will hardly mean addressing the demand for medical care squarely. For that we would possibly need at least three thousand more and only to tide over the present pressure.

How can one, however, be sure that these new additions will accrue benefit to the suffering people? The hospitals and complexes are hardly professionally run. Most of them are hostages to hospital mafiosi. Corruption and organised bullying reduce these expensive set-ups into good for anything but healing. The new inductions, welcome as they are, would lose all meaning if the government health facilities are not alongside cleansed of these stunting afflictions.

Students' Organizations and Political Parties: What are the Real Issues?

by Dr Khandakar Quadrat-I Elahi

What kind of responsibilities do we expect our students to perform? What kind of responsibilities had our students performed in the past? What kind of responsibilities are they performing now? What effects the politicization of students' organizations have on our individual and national welfare? We must know the answers to these questions in order to understand the real issues involved in the current national debate on the relationship between students' organizations and political parties.

Debate, we should first clearly understand the responsibilities that students, the educated and perhaps the most conscious section of our youth, can and should perform. The nature of our responsibilities changes with the change of our ages. Before puberty, we have very little responsibilities. When we step into puberty, we change very rapidly and the nature of our responsibilities changes too. As we complete our educational or other professional requirements and begin to raise families, our responsibilities turn into a new dimension.

The responsibilities we perform throughout our lives can be broadly classified as private and social. The private responsibilities include a course of actions that directly affect our private life and contribute to our personal well-being. The social responsibilities, on the other hand, include those activities which may not contribute directly to our private well-being, but help bring about changes in the society that contribute to our private and national well-being. Poet Sukanta Bhattacharya has superbly described the nature of social responsibilities:

Because the youth usually have very little family responsibilities, they can better perform the social responsibilities. One of our poets has glorified the role that the youth can play in the social development of a country:

বৌবন যাত্রা, যুদ্ধে যাবার এখনই সময় তার।
(It is high time for him to go to the battle field who is young!)

What kind of responsibilities do we expect our students to perform? Several things we need to consider. First, we are now a sovereign nation and have developed some kind of political consensus with respect to electing and changing our governments. This suggests that the present roles of students' organizations are significantly different from what they used to be in the past. Second, our country is economically underdeveloped — it is one of the least developed countries of the world — and is politically unstable. This indicates that students' involvement is warranted in creating an environment congenial for social and economic development. Third, the collapse of socialism in the

Soviet Union and the Eastern Europe culminating in the end of the Cold War, has created a new global atmosphere in which the political roles that the student organizations used to play in the past have become redundant. Finally, we live in an era where some countries are far, far advanced than ours in virtually all respects of social living: academics, business, management of state machinery, what not. And we live in the era of globalization that forces us to compete with those advanced countries. In this era of globalization, the students are our only hope.

Under these circumstances, we want our students to perform their private responsibilities as their parents' guardians; we also want them, as the citizens of the state, to perform their social responsibilities. Our students' private responsibilities require them to get well equipped with adequate knowledge and training so as to build up prosperous professional lives in politics, business, academics and civil service. These private responsibilities are important equally from our private, national and international perspectives. The students must be intellectually capable to establish themselves in their private lives. From the national perspective, we must remember that the national prosperity is the sum total of successes of individual members of the nation; as each per-

son prospers individually, the nation prospers collectively. Thus, both for private well-being and national development, our students must perform their private responsibilities efficiently and effectively. Finally, all the above are needed to receive, individually and collectively in this era of globalization and face the uncompromising and un-abating international competition.

The foundation of our society is highly feeble, because our political system is faulty; it breeds and begets corruption and injustice. The only force that has the power to enforce reforms in our political system is our conscious student community. Thus, the social responsibilities of our students are extra-ordinarily important; they must help bringing about reforms in our political system. These they can accomplish by conducting their academic exercise of analyzing social, economic and political problems of the country and mount irresistible movements against all sorts of injustices in the society. These they will be able to do if they are free from all sorts of political influence.

movement for provincial autonomy and finally their role in our Liberation War. The second period has begun after 1971. The nature and role of student organizations in this period are fundamentally different from the previous period. Awami League, which led the movement for provincial autonomy and finally the Liberation War, came out virtually as the only political party in the country and Chhatra League, the student wing of the Awami League, became the dominant students' organization. After Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was killed in August 1975, the martial law government suspended all organizational activities including politics. To return the country to the civilian rule, the then President Ziaur Rahman reintroduced multi-party political system and at the same time formalized the relation between political parties and student organizations through endorsing it in the Constitution.

Politicisation of Students' Organisations
The formalization of the relationship between students' organizations and political

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Role of Students' Organizations

In the past, our students' organizations had played historic roles in our national crises which we generally describe by the catch phrase student politics. Muhammad Hannan, an authority on the role of students' organizations, has dated the beginning of student movements in 1830. In that year, the July Revolution abolished monarchy from France. A few politically conscious students brought down the British flag from a newly-built monument at the dead hour of night and hoisted the French flag. This incident is considered as the Mile-Post of student movements in Bangladesh.

The history of students' organizations in Bangladesh can be broadly divided into two periods. The first period ends in 1971, the year of liberation. An analysis of the role of students' organizations during this long period would reveal two very important points. First, the student's organizations were largely independent of political parties therefore, from their influence. Second, the students organized movements around issues that were basically national and international in character. Examples include students' role in the movements against colonialism, against the division of Bengal etc., Language Movement of 1952, movement against martial law,

parties has fundamentally changed the nature and role of student organizations in our country that have severe consequences. To clearly understand these consequences, we should have a clear idea about the fundamental objectives of political parties and student organizations. There is one and only objective of political parties all over the world: capturing the state power. In democracy, this competition among political parties to secure state power serves three very important functions: (i) it restrains the politicians in power from abusing state authority, (ii) it enhances the efficiency of political system of country, and (iii) it ensures that political parties work for public welfare, because they have to return to the public for their mandates.

The objectives of student organizations are entirely different. These basically involve students' interests in the academic institutions. Beyond institutional problems, the students, as part of their social responsibilities, undertake activities which may have profound impact on existing political structure and situation in the society. By doing this, they accomplish two critical responsibilities: an academic exercise of analyzing social problems and building leadership quality. The history of our student organizations contains many glorious examples of these activities. The objective of student

politics is not any way related to capturing state power.

Because student organizations are part of our political parties and therefore, controlled by them, the fundamental objectives of student organizations are being frustrated and they have become a regressive force in our social development. First, the academic exercise the students undertake in analyzing social, economic and political problems, and building leadership quality has been hindered. Second, educational institutions are the places to exercise and learning democratic principles and values. Since the students organizations are controlled by the political parties and the educational institutions are controlled by their armed cadres, the question of exercising and learning democratic principles and values in our country is totally irrelevant. To speak the truth, these principles and values have not only been frustrated in our educational institutions; the general students can hardly express their opinions freely, let alone protest against the injustices being perpetrated all the time. Third, all political parties all over the world play the role of a watchdog to find fault of the government and other political parties, because all of them have the same goal: forming the government. Thus, when student organizations are controlled by the political parties, they automatically become involved in the political game. This destroys the very purpose of student organizations and makes negative impact on private successes and national development. Finally, students are a very strong social force in our country that prevents governments and other parties/groups from abusing powers. The student organizations cannot exercise this force when they become involved with the political parties.

One point that should not escape the eyes and mind of any careful social observer is, our students have lost their historic status they used to enjoy in our national life: provided leadership in solving important national problems. Not very long ago, we have overcome a political crisis that brought the entire nation to a standstill in which the students had no role. That the students remained removed from such important national crisis never happened since the British period. The student leaders no longer enjoy the trust and respect of the public they used to have in the past.

Conclusion
The message of the paper is loud and clear: For solving the crisis of our educational system, for enforcing reforms in our political system and for creating an environment congenial for economic and social development of the country, we must sever all formal relations between political parties and students' organizations. This will do two things: First, it will prevent the politicians from using these organizations for their own vested interests. Second, students free from all sorts of influence, coercion and temptations, will contribute positively in national development.

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Flashes from the Past : Parting of the Ways

Holding out the promise of "early realisation of full government for India," London announced fresh elections. Both Congress and the League expressed their disappointment over the wording of the announcement — the former missed any reference to "independence" and the latter to "Pakistan".

M AHATMA Gandhi and Quid-e Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah were now irreconcilably apart. They had corresponded and met but had found no common ground. Gandhi's argument was that the religion could not be the basis for nationality.

"If tomorrow I embrace Islam do I belong to a different nation overnight?" Gandhi asked. Jinnah's reply was straight: "The Muslims in the Indian subcontinent are a different nation by the dint of their belief, culture and way of living."

After the breakdown of the talks, Wavell, who succeeded Linlithgow as Viceroy in 1944, tried to provide a bridge between Congress and the League. He called on June 25, 1945 a meeting of 21 political leaders, including Gandhi and Jinnah, at Simla. The purpose was to reorganise the Viceroy's executive council to make it more representative and more Indian; the office of Commander-in-Chief which was a bone of contention during the Cripps mission was to stay with the British.

From the very beginning, the Simla conference got snarled over who could represent the Muslims. After Jinnah had taken over the Muslim League in the mid-thirties, his whole endeavour was to get all Muslims under the League's flag. And gradually he had taken the stand that "non-League Muslims are traitors in the enemy camp."

Congress, on the other hand, said that it represented all communities, including Muslims. It admitted that it had comparatively few Muslims in its ranks but the ministry in the Muslim-dominated North-West Frontier Province was Congress and stalwarts like Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Khan Sahib (who became chief minister of West Pakistan after partition) were all Congressmen. The Congress president at that time, Abul Kalam Azad, was also a Muslim.

The Congress Party did not mind party between Muslims and caste Hindus (a phrase coined to describe Hindus other than belonging to the scheduled castes). It did not mind party between itself and the Muslim League. In fact, the list submit-

ted by Congress had only two Hindus. One Christian, one Sikh and one Parsee were the other three members in his book, India Wins Freedom. It could have been said that the Hindus, who constituted the majority community of India, would object to such a proposal, but it was said to their credit that the Hindus of India stood solidly behind the Congress."

The point to which it did not agree to was Jinnah's demand that the League alone had the right to nominate the Muslim members. How could a party which was conducting a national struggle for the Indian people as a whole compromise on fundamentals?

At one meeting, when Jinnah was expounding his thesis that Congress represented only Hindus, Khan Sahib, at that time the Congress premier of the NWFP, protested and said: "I am a Muslim." Wavell immediately intervened and said: "I accept that."

Jinnah expanded his demands and argued that since the Sikh and Scheduled Caste members in the executive council would vote with the Congress, nothing should be decided if the majority of the Muslim members were opposed to it. And on the question of nominating the Muslim members, he remained firm. When Wavell told Jinnah quietly that he had better accept a non-Congress Muslim from the Punjab Unionist Party, he said: "No." He wanted that all the Muslim ministers in the Viceroy's executive should be from the League.

After Jinnah's rejection of his proposal, Wavell did not consult others and announced the failure of the conference. This further demoralised non-League Muslims, strengthened Jinnah and lessened the chances of a united government. Despite their acute differences Congress and the League did, however, join hands when the Indian National Army men were put on trial in Delhi in 1945.

The INA, primarily a force drawn from among the Indian soldiers captured by the

Japanese after the fall of Malaya and Burma in the Second World War, was an anti-colonial movement led by the former Congress leader, Subhas Chandra Bose, who had quarrelled with Gandhi over non-violence as a method to oust the British.

The trial of the INA officers — Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs — forged Indian sentiment together and there was a joint nationwide demand for their release. The British government had to comply. This instance indicated that Congress and the League, or for that matter, Hindus and Muslims, could forsake their inter-caste quarrels and join hands for a national cause.

elections on the basis of Swaraj (Independence), which promised maximum autonomy to the states.

The results showed that 90 per cent of the Hindus were behind Congress and 90 per cent of the Muslims behind the League. Out of the 102 elected seats in the Central Assembly, the Congress won 57 and the League 30. Every Muslim seat in the Central Legislative Assembly went to the League which also won 442 out of the 509 Muslim seats in the provincial assemblies.

Once again the League lost in the NWFP where Congress Muslims won a majority. In Punjab also, the pro-agriculturist Unionist Party took away seven

tacked the Congress first.

An all-party parliamentary delegation, which had visited India a couple of months earlier, had told the mission what Nehru thought, namely, that the British government might have to concede Pakistan and that a plebiscite might be necessary in border districts to know

the preference of the people of those areas. Jinnah had also told the parliamentary delegation that non-Muslim areas like the Ambala division of Punjab could not remain part of Pakistan.

But were Nehru's views shared by other Congress leaders? Was Pakistan inevitable? Where did Gandhi stand? These questions baffled the mission, which first asked Azad, still the Congress president, to spell out his party's stand.

OPINION

Justification of Holiday

S M Majedur Rahim

We are a 100 per cent export-oriented Korean-owned world's largest cap manufacturing company incorporated in Bangladesh and operating in Uttara, Dhaka area also in DEEPZ Savar. Our operation in Bangladesh started in 1991.

We are very surprised and shocked to see the Bangladesh Government's decision and declaration through major newspapers of 2-day weekly holiday.

This will definitely put Bangladesh a step backward in the economic development we are pursuing. A country with one of the lowest per capita income in the world cannot afford the luxury of 2-day holiday a week. Nowhere in the world we can see such an instance. We wonder what prompted the government to take such a decision at a time when the people of Bangladesh need to work hard to catch up with other Asian nations on the verge of 21st century.

Already, we are having Friday problem because of Friday as weekly holiday and government office timing of 8:00 AM to 2:30 PM. It is a funny idea of saving government funds by doing nothing. As a matter of fact, nobody asked for it rather everybody was expecting Sunday as weekly holiday instead of Friday.

With the introduction of the system, all the industries specially the export-oriented industries will have severe setback, as all the government of-

fices including EPB, Customs, BOI, BEPZA, Banks, shipping Co's will be closed. As a matter of fact, it will definitely have a negative impact on further foreign investment in Bangladesh. Moreover, I am afraid government employees will now tend to go to their village/home towns on Thursday afternoon and will come back on Sunday during lunchtime. Literally, we will have only full three working days (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday).

Ideally, now in Bangladesh everybody should work full six days. But considering the socio-cultural heritage of Bangladesh we would request the Bangladesh government to reconsider this new order and declare the weekly holiday and government office timings as follows:

- a) Sunday should be the weekly holiday.
- b) Saturday should be the half working day.
- c) Office timing (for govt. office only) should be 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM Monday-Friday and 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM on Saturday.
- d) One-hour break can be given on Friday for Jumma prayer.

We can point out a lot of our problems that we will go through. Each organisation will surely suffer problems of their own sort. The government has to consider all points.

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