

Stormbound BUET

We are worried at the way things are shaping up at the Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology (BUET). There has been a progressive deterioration in the situation since we last commented on the contentious issue that has come to cloud the reputation of this distinguished educational institution for some time now. Let alone any sign of breakthrough, the problem has deepened.

The whole affair reeks communication disorder and psychological hang-up. No problem is beyond solution through discussion provided the two parties have open mind and are prepared to listen to each other.

Loan Defaulters' List

Finance Minister SAMS Kibria's disclosure of the loan defaulters' list on the floor of the parliament has given rise to widespread debate. Country's business community has reacted sharply saying the list is not very authentic.

This is not to say that the government is on the wrong track in the essence but the approach does not quite commend itself either. There is no doubt loan defaulting has been one of the greatest economic impediments we have known in the recent times.

To their credit the business community has come forward with its recommendations which we are sure the government would give due consideration to. But the community is yet to do what it could have done earlier: ostracising the defaulters.

CBA Excess in PDB

While the whole country grovels under acute power shortage, a section of the Power Development Board (PDB) employees are leading life in a manner that may even shame some of Dhaka's nouveau rich community.

Reassuringly the government seems to have finally woken up to the problem. Formation of the task force which recently submitted its report after having probed into the CBA activities in the government banks is a clear sign of that belated awareness.

As they are now functioning in our country have long lost all sense of direction and turned into pockets of self interest.

THE cities are the chief centres of "modernization" not only in their concentration of industrial growth, but also as transport hubs, financial centres and the major clusters of higher education, technical advances and intellectual ferment.

According to a World Bank report, 1.2 million urban households (24 per cent of the total urban) are living today in slums while some 0.6 million households are either homeless or squatters.

Much of the future structure of urbanization, the same study notes, will depend on the investment on infrastructure.

Urban Implosion - A Daunting Challenge

Politicians and development planners alike do not like slums around them, particularly when the capital city is getting choked in its own effluent and disfigured by vast clouds of the homeless and the squatters.

future transport demand and its nodes as well as the incidence of urban poverty. Although it may satisfy the aesthetic sense of affluent core-city dwellers, an indirect effect of such distant locations will come from the net loss of time and energy from commuting by foot to work-places by the urban poor.

Given this rather grim scenario let us look at the future urbanization pattern. Again, let me paraphrase from the World Bank study. Mega city of Dhaka with the current population of 8-9 million will be the some 14 million people by the year 2010 and 15-20 million by the year 2020.

Completion of the Bangladesh bridge over Jamuna, a possible multimodal transport linkage with India's eastern and northern frontier states, and installation of broad gauge railway along Sirajganj-Iswardi-Rajshahi corridor will enhance the importance of Rajshahi metropolitan centre as well as other medium and small towns in the western districts.



Do I Dare! AZM Obaidullah Khan

current land fill. Urban land, already scarce, will get even more scarce.

Given the projections above, it is clear that a political consensus on a rational urban strategy that can generate both employment opportunities for the poor and low-income people and provide at least livable space to reside in.

It is a good omen that the government and its international development partners are considering a valid option of spatial dispersion by establishing numerous market towns and linking those both with the hinterland and major commercial centres.

The Rural Infrastructure study of the World Bank identifies 2010 market towns or growth centres dispersed all over the country. Another study "The Non-Farm Sector in Diversifying Rural Economy

ther on a temporary or on a daily basis.

Besides, a virtuous circle of agricultural and non-farm development will be initiated. Physical infrastructure and linkages with the market will spur agricultural productivity and diversity. That in turn will galvanize both trade and commerce and the establishment of medium and small industries dispersed all over the country.

What are the obstacles to starting or expanding industry in dispersed rural locations or semi-urban areas near a city?

Also required will be investment incentives for the private sector or NGO venture-capitalists and removal of untimely subsidies against the rural/semi-urban sector because of the location of financial and regulatory hubs in the capital city.

A caveat needs to be introduced here. Experience in East Asia and elsewhere in the world shows that the growth of rural non-farm sector and of village township industries is closely related to the stimulus of agricultural development itself.

What are the obstacles to starting or expanding industry in dispersed rural locations or semi-urban areas near a city?

sponse to the growing purchasing power among farm families. The low productivity of non-farm rural employment in Bangladesh is in part a reflection of the uncertainty of agricultural production and its technological stagnation particularly in development and diffusion of quality seeds or in diversification into high value crops.

Having said that let me once again repeat that the challenges of rapid urbanization are daunting. According to a World Bank estimate, "From a base of 24 million in 1996, the urban population is expected to be 31 million in the year 2000 about 52 million by 2010 and nearly 79 million in 2020.

As future constituencies will become increasingly urban, a political consensus should be forthcoming on a national urban strategy and its implementation. Issues of location according to spatial and economic growth patterns, investment in physical infrastructure and utilities, expansion of social development, encouraging private initiatives in investment and transparency of municipal governance along with adequate delegated authority are all necessary components for both an immediate and larger term programme framework.

To the Editor...

Teachers of E-medium

Sir, Beyond any doubt, teaching the children ABC is a tough job - and the teachers content have to be very patient in this respect. But my experience, as a guardian, with an English medium school located at Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur (formerly situated at Dhanmohi Road No. 6) is frustrating. As far as my acquaintances' experiences are concerned, teachers of all the English medium schools are the same: "below the standard" - much below than what we as students got while studying in the Bengali medium schools.

Take my 5-year-old nephew, for instance. He is never given home-work (literally, to do some work for home) by his class teacher, but she (the class teacher) complains to the boy's mother every other day that "the boy is not looked after properly at home, nobody tutors him the lessons at home, the boy is dumb, etc."

ii) There's a sort of diary in which the teacher is supposed to communicate (that's what the principal [why do we call 'head masters' or 'head teachers' principals these days?]) said when the boy was admitted into the school with the parents. Why is the boy's mother, then, summoned at the school almost every day?

iii) Why does the teacher complains everyday without giving any home-work, keeping all the books at the school premises?

Well, the English medium gurus, answer these three - then I will ask more questions putting your competence in question.

Architecture Department Pandemonium

Sir, I am a lecturer of the Department of Architecture BUET and currently pursuing my higher studies in the United States. I am utterly dismayed and shocked by seeing the news of recent resignation of 15 teachers of the Dept. of Architecture BUET in the DS. Everyone knows that over the decades, BUET Architecture Department has been producing promising architects in Bangladesh and many of them are successfully pursuing their career both in and outside the country.

The recent attempt by the BUET authority to amend the system of examination in order to generalise the whole system, certainly is going to make a negative impact on the growth

of architectural education as well as practice in Bangladesh. Moreover, I also cannot understand the strong urge of the BUET authority to amend an established system of admission procedure which many successful architects of the country had been through.

BUET is a national institution and an internationally reputed university which has a long history of producing responsible and brilliant engineers and architects. Teachers of this university are among the most brilliant students of the country and have been able to earn respect from people of all strata.

So, resignation of 15 teachers of the Department of Architecture justifies ponderous attention from all quarters. I specially request the prime minister to look into this national issue, because lives of hundreds of students of the Department of Architecture are inextricably interconnected with this matter.

Zafar Haidi Lecturer on Leave (Department of Architecture, BUET) Department of Urban Planning The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Los Angeles, CA 90024, USA

Shame!

Sir, On 16th March, as part of our peaceful protest against the new admission test system for Architecture Dept. at BUET, the students were asking the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Planning to resign on moral grounds because 15 out of 22 of our respected teachers had resigned earlier, protesting the lie and misinformation that is being spread about them.

Suddenly a group of senior teachers from the Engineering departments (mercenaries?) arrived to 'rescue' their colleague and started hurling abuses like 'bastard' and 'eetor' towards us. What sins did we committed to be branded as 'bastards'? And was it serious enough to make someone, that too a teacher, forget about the values of modesty and propriety?

Shaon Dept. of Architecture, BUET

Irrational changes

Sir, We are worried about the ongoing stalemate at the Department of Architecture BUET, regarding the irrational changes in the process of admission test which has reached a volatile situation. Fifteen teachers of the Arch dept., whom we knew to be the best and most respected, have resigned on 16th March, 1998, protesting this irrational change in the admission process by the authority with support from 7 other corrupt teachers of the said department.

As the nature of studies in Architecture is of creative nature (strongly related to all branches of visual arts), so far it has been following a unique format of admission test, quite different from the other faculties of Engineering in the same university. The recent attempt to amend the system of examination in order to generalise the whole system certainly is going to make a negative impact on the growth of architectural education as well as practice in Bangladesh.

This is outrageous, perverted and irresponsible act, which cannot be endorsed by any of us who really care about our beloved alma mater. Think

about this: so far, what we have lost due to the reluctance of giving full recognition from the government (IAB's role in this case can be questioned); we cannot even be part of any foreign institute functionally. How on earth this idea of merging two different nature of exams came into the mind of a few irresponsible (so-called) intellectuals. Is there any rational logic they can show us? What type of students are we expecting to see into the stream of the architectural education? In addition, what category of professionals we can foresee to be generated from those unfortunate students who are to be selected by a common screening process?

Let us voice against it and stop the anti-Architecture casuistry.

Qazi Mahtabuzzaman, PhD Student University of HK

Recent events

Sir, I have a very small radio. I live in China. I regularly try to hear the broadcast from the BBC and VOA in Bengali. And to my surprise, I can hear those programmes. It's very tiresome for us to listen to these programmes, as we have to be awake very late at night.

Every night, it's the same news (fun?). And the summation is very easy: The country is marching backward!!! But why? The leaders of the country tour a lot outside, and they learn a lot from the foreign countries. But those learnings, as I think, are evaporated or seized at the ZIA, either by the heat or by the customs!

As for the holiday on 17 March, I think it was an unnecessary event. This government is doing a lot of things which are unprecedented in our history. Actually they are eating the 30 days "polau" at one sitting. What benefits are the people getting from this government?

Sajjad Waheed Box 532 Hangzhou 310027, PRC

Why resign?

Sir, I was flabbergasted when I read the news item in DS on the 16th March about 15 BUET teachers resigning. BUET happens to be one of the best academic institutions of our country. The teachers as well as the students there are the best when it comes to education. Yet, it is disheartening to see that a noble institute as such can degrade itself to such a level. Whatever is wrong with the admission process should be raised in the meetings arranged with themselves and the authorities concerned.

But when the students of a particular department goes for non-cooperation and the teachers resign - that is known as a straightforward and good old fashioned "blackmail". The students getting admitted in BUET had to go through a lot of obstacles and elevate themselves in their academic fields. The teachers are more than qualified to get a chance to teach those students too. When they themselves resort to blackmail what sort of an example are they trying to set for the other student teachers and academic institutions? Are they trying to prove that when something doesn't go your way, then resign?

Masroor Ahmed Deepak Dhaka

Helping the homeopaths

Sir, This refers to the statement made in the Jatiya Sangsad by a member, as telecast by the BTB in its 'Ajker Sangsad' programme recently. The legislator Begum Qamrunnahan Putul, called for setting up of homeopathic health centres in each thana and union in the country. The homeopaths and all those longing for the best possible medicine at the minimum possible cost have hailed her call as a timely, bold patriotic and people-oriented one.

It is now widely expected that the government committed to the welfare of the people will take steps to implement this. It will be a big step forward in achieving the national goal of 'health for all by the year 2000' and also remedying the injustice done so far to homeopathy and homeopaths in the country.

In this connection, I would also like to refer to a report carried by two leading national dailies that three top medical experts from the United States recently visited Dhaka to meet renowned homeopath Dr. Ali Ahmed and see for themselves his 'success' in the treatment of cancer and such other dreadful diseases.

Dr Md Nasrullah Islam DHMS Barkatia Homeo Hall MR Road, Daina Crossing, Magura.

Shifting of patient to CMH

Sir, A minor girl - victim of rape - has been shifted to CMH for better treatment by our Prime Minister. Very often we see such news that important personalities get into CMHs in the Cantonments for treatment.

As a common citizen of the country this aspect is not clear to me as to why people rush to CMH? This attitude undermines the doctors/administrators in the general hospitals. This indicates that doctors outside are inefficient and the hospitals outside are poorly managed.

Is it so? If so, then why appropriate steps are not taken against these?

Syed Ahmed Ali New Bejpara, Jessore.

Right to live

Sir, In a country where innocent girls of tender ages are not spared of sexual targets, is the country then worth living? Rape cases are disgracefully and alarmingly on the rise. Like, Tania many other little children have been violated over the years, shamefully again most at the hands of some law protecting men.

If the complete lack of morality in this particular department continues, then imagine the height of insecurity and danger the country is in. Scores of protest rallies and suggestions have been demanded for imposing capital punishments against the rapists and other criminals. But except for a few cases most criminals go unnoticed. Otherwise, rape and other severe crimes would have stopped long ago. Tania's rape case have now ignited further fright and insecurity among many parents and guardians to even send their daughters to school. I mean house of learning, for their future existence. Since rallies, protests and suggestions have shown less im-

pact to deal with criminals, the conscious citizens have got to come out of their shells and do something drastic, say, fast unto death.

We have got to save our children from the hands of those who perverted sick rascals.

K. Vigar Moinuddin Dhaka

Dustbin!

Sir, There is a dustbin on the way to Jasiuddin, Zia and Bangabandhu Halls of the University of Dhaka. It is not cleaned regularly. Consequently, it often contains a "peculiar stench".

The residential students of these three halls have to move through this dirty and unhealthy environment.

Is it impossible to remove the dust regularly?

Md Ahmadul Haque (Topu) 510, Zia Hall University of Dhaka.

Welcome BNP

Sir, Return of the main opposition BNP to the Jatiya Sangsad on March 8, 1998 infused life to an otherwise dull session. After six months the BNP came back to the House following a two-point agreement with the AL on March 2. Congratulations to both BNP and AL. The treasury and opposition may not and will not agree on most issues but that does not mean the Parliament has to be boycotted every time.

We sincerely hope that the change of heart BNP has shown will also contribute to the qualitative change of our parliamentary practice.

Advocate Hasna Begum Judge Court, Dhaka.

Kudos for the practical jokes

Sir, I certainly appreciate Mr. Masroor Ahmed Deepak for taking the trouble to write again to enlighten me about his practical jokes. May be I should have been more explicit, what I wanted to say simply is that men love to play practical jokes, for the sheer pleasure by placing the other person in awkward situation - so it is quite likely that just for fun they might spread rumours about some persons, and this is where practical joke comes into this, as an example.

And about taking bribes, may be a few women do take bribes, but when compared to males, it will be totally insignificant as the list of men taking bribes will be unending.

Nur Jahan East Nastrabad, Chittagong

Label me, if your may...

Sir, I am a researcher and now engaged in Central Dutch University in conducting research on impact of the holocaust of World War II particularly of nuclear bombing on coming generations.

I happened to be in Dhaka on vacations and had an opportunity to read your esteemed daily. I was surprised to see in a few papers including the DS, sudden eruption of the slogan of 'apology for events of '71'. But what dismayed me more was little knowledge of history particularly when equating Germany and Japan with Pakistan in the

context of 'apology'.

With my legal background and some knowledge of history, I may venture to say that Germany and Japan, both committed aggression and occupied by force sovereign countries causing unbelievable human miseries. Whereas Pakistan faced political crisis as majority party in 1970 General Elections was not allowed to form government at the Centre.

This resulted in disillusion among the people of the then East Pakistan. Whatever followed was a scenario in which the government of the day took stern action to restore law and order as a sovereign country had to do under the circumstances. Legally it was within the Central government's purview.

But situation worsened only with the induction of foreign forces and Centre's limited capacity.

In view of this scenario the slogan for apology nowhere stands, and equating Pakistan with Germany and Japan amounts to closing eyes from the history. No one should resent this explanation as it is absolutely legal and historical. I wouldn't add more as many would label me treacherous for explaining the legal position.

E Iqbal Ibrahim Shaida H. No. 66-B, Bangabandhu Avenue, Dhaka

More life than crisis

Sir, My recent trip to Dhaka seemed to have coincided with a growing concern in Bangladesh about the state of your stock markets and how best to go about rehabilitating them. The government, the press, and so many others were busy saying much on this subject.

Let me just add that there is more to life than a stock market crisis, and that apart, all suggestions seem to ignore the true villain in the piece which is the foreign institutional investor.

What Dhaka is going through has been experienced, in varying degrees, by Seoul, Bangkok, Karachi, Bombay, in other words by all emerging stock markets. Allowing remedies to come from the Asian Development Bank, for instance, will be terribly expensive and with unworthy results. What needs to be addressed is the conversion of the fund manager from a speculator to an investor which is something that the World Bank and the ADB, for obvious reasons, will avoid doing.

Joseph Michael Pereira 11/5 Rimpia Skyline, Karachi, Pakistan

Emerging markets

Sir, Seriously, for the last year and a half, I have been badgering the World Bank and the IFC to address the true cause of the rise and fall of emerging stock markets but to no avail.

I have sufficient evidence to suggest that the opening of emerging markets to foreign investment has been counter-productive. Emerging countries like Bangladesh should concentrate on enlarging exports and encouraging direct investment and not portfolio investment.

Joseph Michael Pereira 11/5 Rimpia Skyline, 44 Cantonment RA Karachi, Pakistan