

Ban student politics, please

The death of BUET student Sabekunnar Sony shows how vulnerable our educational institutions have become throughout the years due to student politics.

Student politics acted as an asset for the country during 1952-1971 period but now it has become a burden for the country and business for many. Some political leaders supply arms and money to some power-hungry students to ensure their authority over the general students. But their arms culture has resulted only in death of many innocent students and Sony is the latest victim of it.

Every conscious people should come forward and condemn this violent student politics. And they must ban political activities inside all college and university campus and increase security in every educational institute. If the students become victim to politics, who will build the nation, certainly not the blood-thirsty student leaders and the power-hungry politicians.

Reaz Mohiuddin
Dhaka

Sony in my mind

The Honourable PM must be the lucky one for she was born in Bangladesh. And the Honourable Home Minister must be the luckiest guy in this lone planet for he still has a job. They know that their OWN is to blame. They know not, how to tame their OWN. And hence, in the end, for their own follies, they are to BLAME!

Thus when an angry MP thunders (Daily Star, June 11, 2002), "Quit power if you fail to perform....." he is not at odds with the norm.

But norm is not the name-of-the-game in this teeming town of millions. As if some alien border of chaotic entropy is insinuating in the depth of our very land and mind. Thus we see an impotent internal security force (Police) giving way to the excesses of a border security force (BDR).

Alas! We are falling apart in an incessant onslaught of vile on the perimeters of our social construct.

"Criminals always seek shelter, especially of the party in power, and unleash violence in the guise of party men". (Haris Chowdhury, Political Secretary to the PM, Daily Star, June 11, 2002).

Whoa! What a discovery!
Alas! We seem to be our own invaders. Invaders of the border of our own conscience!

Mohammad Zaman
USA

Reconditioned cars are not that bad

Many including me can already visualise the future-- our streets filled with cheap and worthless Indian vehicles. After reading Mr. Bastiat's letter (June 12), I agreed with him to some extent, but not all.

Firstly I should like to tell him that BARVIDA stands for Bangladesh Recondition Vehicle Importers and Distributors Association, and there is no word like Export involved.

Mr. Bastiat may not be knowing that a vehicle is not only judged by its emissions. A car has to be equally safe, comfortable and pleasant to drive, not to mention that it should also be reliable. I have been staying in India for the last five years and have been the Automobile Secretary of our school, thus had to be always up-to-date and deal with the India made cars making continuous comparisons. The result of it was that these Indian cars only complied with Euro II standards, and the rest of it are all below standard (excepting four to five models of Mercedes and Honda).

Mr. Bastiat had also said that "if Indian cars are really so inferior then why would any one buy them?" It seems that Mr. Bastiat have not noticed the two wheelers plying on our roads today. Eight out of ten are India made. The reason is very clear, because there is no other way. You cannot expect reconditioned two wheelers, can you? Now that there are no reconditioned vehicles, many people will go for cheap Indian cars since they cannot afford brand new Japanese or European vehicles and everybody wants to own a car.

Yes, it is indeed true that we will see more expensive cars plying on our roads. But we will also see plenty of below standard vehicles as well. Indian cars comply with Euro II levels because they are fitted with catalytic converters. But without them they are even worse compared to the ten-year-old reconditioned vehicles, most of which have EFI (Electronic Fuel Injectors) system, making it more technologically advanced, more reliable and fuel efficient.

Till now I have never heard reconditioned vehicles breaking down within six months, but yes, have seen brand new Indian vehicles breaking down within months of its purchase. I agree with you that the reconditioned car importers have exceeded their level in cheating their customers. But, it is the customers who are also to be blamed. They can easily get the overall performance of the car's parts and engines checked from Rahimafroz, or Navana or even Power Craft and get a report if its worth buying or not.

If you were to choose between a brand new Maruti 800 and a reconditioned Toyota Starlet, which one would you choose? And then again

"The PM must rid her party of all criminals"



"Come here, I want to shoot you"

The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam makes the point that for BNP to survive the PM must rid her party of criminals and gangsters. But this begs the question, is she capable of doing that? Even if she wanted to rein in the criminals in her party can she? The commentary does not dwell upon the de facto seat of power that is Hawa Bhaban. Does Hawa Bhaban realise the ignominious blunder their advice to BNP is leading it to? I suspect that both AL and BNP are so rife with criminals and godfathers that their respective leaders will not be able to bring these elements under control even if they had the will to do so. Doubly difficult for BNP as there is a tug of war for the PM's ear between Hawa Bhaban and some senior (mature) cabinet ministers.

The newspapers have published several reports about an

if you were to choose between a brand new Ford iKon and a Maruti Baleno to a recondition Toyota Corona (premio), which one would you choose? The decision is entirely in your hands.

Ali Masrur
Dhaka

Jamuna Group and liquor license

I see in your paper that the BNP Government is considering reviewing the liquor licence granted to Jamuna Group by Awami League.

It is absurd that Finance Minister Saifur Rahman knows nothing about the liquor licence granted to Jamuna Group.

Secondly regardless of my personal opinions of Jamuna Group they, presumably through large donations, got the government's permission to set up their breweries. Now just because there is a new government, there should not be a review on moral grounds.

There may and should be a review of how Jamuna got their permission in the first place but not for reasons like being contradictory to the ideals of the 4-party alliance.

desch being a disaster-prone country, similar floods in future cannot be ruled out. Hence, an alternate arrangement would need to be catered before implementing Mr. Ali's suggestion.

2. Few thousand crores of Taka would be needed to construct only a runway for medium lift capable aircraft. Land acquisition and cost of necessary installations required to operate an airfield would need few more. Mr. Ali ignored the aspect of financial implications.

3. On closure of Tejgaon airfield, the total aviation load of Dhaka will be shifted to Zia Int Airport. Is Zia capable of handling such a load?

4. Civil and military jointly uses most of our airfields in the country. Since independence we have not been able to provide a dedicated airfield for our forces which is a necessity. Closer of Tejgaon will adversely affect our military aviation operations.

5. In the past, there were steps to make Tejgaon runway a National Parade Square leaving aside Manik Mia Ave, which could be a suitable option for the purpose. Even countries like Russia, China, India etc arrange their National Parades in wide roads closing those for few

impending cabinet reshuffle widely expected the dump the current Home Minister. The same reports also mention that one of the prospective candidates for the Home Ministry, M K Anwar will not take on the portfolio with a State Minister tagged along. In this case Lutuzzaman Babu a nominee of Hawa Bhaban. So far the PM has been sphinx like in her response to the rumours of a cabinet reshuffle. But sphinx like reticence could also be a cover for helplessness.

Cervantes
Dhaka

I am afraid your advice to the PM to read the press reports about the worst law and order situation in the country since her ascendency to power with absolute majority in parliament is too little and too late for her to escape from total humiliation as an administrator.

Come on Mr. Editor whom are you advising to read press reports? Even if she reads your comments would she act accordingly to get rid of her worthless and corrupt ministers and party cadres? Never.

AK Khan
On e-mail

Thanks to Mr. Mahfuz Anam who has become the voice of many in his timely commentary "The PM must rid her party of all criminals" (June 11).

The issues as surfaced by Mr. Anam are of grave concern and need to be addressed right now. But the PM's inertia makes the people believe that, either everything has gone beyond her control or that she is ridding her party not of criminals but of confidence of the people who with high hopes and expectations voted BNP with two-third majority in the Parliament.

If the criminals get immunity from their godfathers, then who gives immunity to these godfathers appearing as ministers, advi-

sing 1972 and humbly ask him to re-consider his suggestion.

Siddiqui
Dhaka

Tax the NGOs!

The letter of Col Shariff Habibur Rahman, psc (Retd.) (June 6) is misleading for it contains wrong information.

He says that the NGOs invest donor money mostly in income generating projects which give them quick return on capital, that their profit making investments are clear deviations from what NGOs are supposed to do, that they do not pay revenue to the state and that they charge interest at high rate.

It is a fact that foreign aid receipts have declined for quite sometime both in the public and non-government sectors. In view of this, some NGOs started setting up commercial enterprises to generate resource for their self-reliance and sustainability, and to support their basic programmes.

The writer apparently is not aware of the fact that NGOs are neither debarred by law from setting up commercial ventures nor are they given special tax exemption of any sort for such activities. All commercial/industrial undertakings of NGOs are required to pay duties, VAT and taxes including income taxes as per law of the land like everyone else. NGOs are paying income tax although the profit is utilised for their targeted programmes like poverty alleviation, education, health and other related programmes. So the commercial activities of the NGOs are subjected to the income taxes just as the business organisations are. For instance, in the assessment year 2001-2002, BRAC has deposited Taka 3 crore 68 lakh 57,120 in government exchequer out of which VAT was Taka 1 crore 43 lakh 52,706 and direct tax of BRAC was Taka 1 crore 24 lakh 38,746. The NGOs are, therefore, subjected to the same taxes that the business organisations have to pay and it is, therefore, not understood as to why in view of the writer "commotion and discontent in the private business sector" should arise. The question of "deviation from what the NGOs are actually supposed to do" also does not arise as generating resource is necessary to implement and expand their basic programmes.

In comparison to normal banking, the operational cost of microcredit is high. Since the loan amount is small as the loan is taken by the poor people, services are provided by the NGOs at their doorsteps, the weekly dues are collected from the homesteads of the borrowers, inputs are made available to them in their villages for their income generating activities, free training is provided to the borrowers for their skill development etc.

The service charge, which has been referred to as 'interest' by the writer, is fixed taking all these factors into account. Donors do not grant any funds to the NGOs for any commercial venture and the writer's presumption in this respect is totally wrong. Going for commercial enterprises by NGOs has become a normal practice in other countries as well. For instance, Oxfam owns and runs hundreds of shops of readymade clothes in the UK and a non-profit institution like the Harvard University has commercial ventures like hotels to generate resource.

It has been appreciated nationally and internationally that BRAC, the largest national NGO in Bangladesh, which was fully dependent on foreign donations when it was born, has steadily become self-reliant. In 1994, when BRAC's annual budget was Tk. 307 crore it was only 28 per cent self-reliant. In 7 years time in 2001, its self-reliance reached 80 per cent with an annual budget of Tk. 920 crore.

In a workshop jointly organised by Bangladesh Parliament

Journalists Association and Economic Reporters' Forum on May 27 the Hon'ble Finance Minister has said that next year's Annual Development Programme would have to focus more on domestic resources.

He also commented that the disbursement of the aid in pipeline was uncertain because the set

World Cup 2002 and the English commentators



England and "The hand of God"

It is 36 years that England won the World Cup in soccer while England was the host. The win against former West Germany was not out of controversy as referee denied the German equaliser. Everybody saw that. Even England Captain regretted to Beckenbauer, 'Sorry Franz'. In the current major sports arena, it is very hard to find any English success. Look at Cricket, they hosted four times the World Cup, but could not make it for a single time. Look at Tennis, it is very hard to find that any English player have moved to

conditions were impractical and unmatched with the country's basic development needs.

Hon'ble Minister's observation was not only in line with what the NGOs have been trying to do but it also echoed a popular proverb of Zimbabwe: "If your hand is in another man's pocket all the time, you have to keep on moving with that person to whatever direction he likes!"

BRAC's gradual self-reliance allows it to move in the direction it chooses in the interest of the poor people of Bangladesh.

M Tajul Islam
Director Public Affairs
BRAC

Shawon--to save a friend

We live in a society where Nawshen's murderers roam around scot-free, news of launch capsize makes headline and poor Sony becomes victim to crossfire. And we forget about these news the next day. But when the smell of deterioration of moral values and absence of love can be smelt in every corner, a few students made all the difference. A small group of students came up with a view to save Shawon, a 2nd-year student of Physics department of Dhaka University suffering from leukaemia and thus established a unique example.

When the doctors in Calcutta recommended an operation in Singapore, which will cost around 40 lacs as his only chance of survival Shawon was heartbroken. Belonging to a middle-class family it was simply impossible for his parents to afford such a huge amount and thus he lost hope. But it was his friends who first came forward to enlighten the hope to live. It was their love and encouragement, which helped him to have the power to fight with cancer. All of them with their limited sources and means came forward and are fighting every moment to save their beloved friend. They are knocking every door possible, standing on roads in this scorching heat to collect money, arranging film shows-- all these to have Shawon back. Their effort and dedication proved that it's no longer a crisis of Shawon's family but a crisis of all of them which they are ready to fight together. But all these are not enough to arrange such an enormous amount. So far only eight lacs have been arranged from various sources of charity. But a huge amount is still needed.

Now the question is if Shawon's classmates with their limited means can come forward then why can't we stretch helping hands towards him to fulfil his dream, which he has nurtured for so long? Can't we who waste thousands of money in various unimportant sources, contribute a little bit in this corner which can

sors, MPs, party bosses and party fund contributions? Due to the PM's silence on the law and order situation speculation sparks that either she has accepted this frustrating situation or she is fully aware of the criminal activities and also about the criminals but is not interested in bringing them to justice.

The PM must act now and do something about this grave situation. Otherwise, everybody knows that history repeats itself and BNP is sure to suffer for their misrule.

Please let the peace-loving civilians live peacefully or wait until Mr. Anam's gospel has its inverse effect.

Mustafiz
Dhaka



The power of imagination

One of the most horrifying aspects of the tension between India and Pakistan is the number of people, on both sides, who are enthusiastic for a war 'to sort things out'. When it is

information.

But the underlying reason for this failure of imagination affects the whole of the sub-continent, including Bangladesh. That is, the failure of so many of your schools to encourage the development of the imagination, disciplined by factual information, so that people are able to understand something of what it

Harassment of a minor immigrant at ZIA

I am an immigrant and I live in New York. I applied for my minor daughter's visa, which was approved and she was granted immigrant "V-2" visa by the US Embassy in Dhaka.

Subsequently she reserved a Biman seat and was scheduled to leave Dhaka on June 6th, Friday by a direct flight to USA. She was duly checked in by Biman ticket agents, who are experienced about US Visa procedures, and issued a boarding pass. However, when she proceeded for boarding, she was stopped by two police officers, accusing her of carrying a fake visa.

They confiscated her ticket and passport and cancelled her trip. I consider this to be a harassment and demand an action against these corrupt officers.

I'd like to draw the attention of the appropriate authorities so that in future no one has to go through this kind of bitter experience, which my minor daughter went through.

Tamanna Yasmin
New York, USA

"Minus the man"

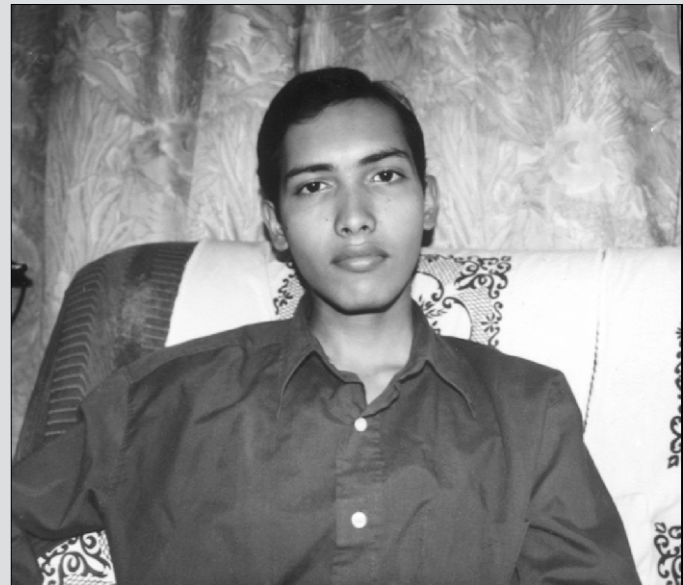
I read The Daily Star everyday to get update news. I was really surprised reading Mohammad Badrul Ahsan's article "Minus the man". Who is she? Is there really somebody like her or it was just your imagination? I am really interested to know more about the fact!

You wrote something that is very inner core of a girl, and difficult to express in words even for a girl! How did you read all these stuff!

Asma, On e-mail

save a valuable life. If we can save Amit can't we save Shawon? Shawon's friends don't know whether they will be able to arrange the money within the limited time, whether his footsteps will ever illumine the university campus but all they believe is-- "love can conquer all and with love we will conquer cancer!"

Antara Ahmed
Department of English, DU



Conquering cancer with love