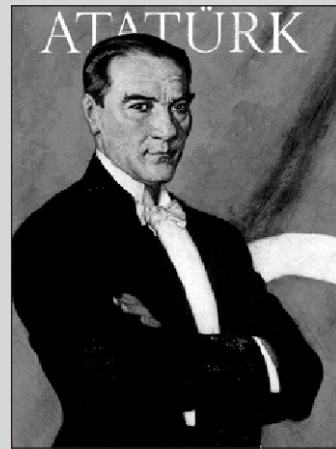


Kamal Ataturk



The debate goes on...

I have read with amazement and dismay several letters in your Letters to the Editor section following the article "Ata Turks" by MJ Akbar (June 27). It has not been a great surprise that the above mentioned article has received reactions from Bangladesh, as well as from all over the world. This is the proof that Ataturk is really a great leader whose ideas are still valid in the 21st century.

However, the vulgarity of some letters and the rude descriptions regarding the Republic of Turkey, Turkish People and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founding President of the Republic of Turkey have forced me to write this letter. Turkey, as a modern democratic country, based on contemporary values such as respect to human rights, the rule of law and freedom of press, is open to criticism provided that it is constructive.

I can understand that there are still some people in Bangladesh and in the world, who can not comprehend the real power behind the revolutions carried out by Ataturk. Secularism is one of the major pillars of modern Turkey. Ataturk's secularism is not against Islam or any other religion. It is against the method people think and govern themselves. According to Ataturk, if people do not free their brains from superstitions, they cannot be free.

Similarly, although almost 98 per cent of the Turkish people are Muslim, Turkey is governed in accordance with its secular Constitution and the Laws enacted by the Turkish Grand National Assembly. By means of those revolutions, which freed the minds of the Turkish people and provided western type civil and political rights and education, Turkey has become one of the top 20 economies of the world today.

In Turkey, Muslim people and religious minorities enjoy freedom of worship. Secularism has secured peaceful co-existence of all religions in Turkey. In the meantime, Turkey has been one of the pioneers to protect the image of the Muslim countries in Europe. I would like to remind the meeting organised by Turkey for enhancing harmony and dialogue between Muslim and Christian countries in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11. This meeting was held in Istanbul/Turkey in February 2002, and gathered Foreign Ministers of the members of the European Union and the Organisation of the Islamic Countries.

Bangladeshi people have made significant moral and financial support to the Turkish Liberation War in 1920s. Turkish people define Bangladesh as a brotherly and friendly country. Turkey and Bangladesh have deeply rooted historical relations. I would like to request the Bangladeshi friends to contact Turkish Embassy in Dhaka or consult the web page of the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs at "www.mfa.gov.tr" in order to get comprehensive and true information regarding Turkey and Ataturk to avoid further prejudiced and false comments, which really hurts your Turkish brethren.

A Metin Durmus
Charge d' Affaires a.i.
Embassy of Turkey, Dhaka

I have been reading some criticism of the great Turkish leader Kamal Ataturk in this section and felt compelled to write a few lines.

Kamal Ataturk saved Turkey from one of the most corrupt Ottoman regime and guided Turkey to become the most advanced Muslim nation in the world. Instead of going back and forth about his ancestors or habits, let the achievements speak for himself. If we consider economics, social justice, technological advancement or education as the indicator of the progress of a country, no one can really argue that Turkey is the number one Muslim country in the world.

Being in a US school, I see so many brilliant Turkish students and their achievements make me proud. On the contrary, all other Muslim countries with supposedly Islamic rule have been in the ocean of illiteracy, with no social justice where the economy is on the verge of collapse. Therefore, I advice to all the anti-Kamal Ataturk people to be really honest before making a comment. You should appreciate Kamal Ataturk's greatness, as he pushed Turkey in a better direction.

AN
University of California, USA

This is in regards to the recent debate on Ataturk which was set off by a rather misty eyed column by M J Akbar. The initial response was from Antonia Antonopoulo to the misrepresentations of M J Akbar's column.

As often happens in *The Daily Star* letters page, this set off a storm of letters. What I found amazing was the wide variety of people who wrote on this issue. We had supporters of the Greeks

arguing for the liberation of Thrace and Anatolia from 400 years of Turkish rule spiced with a dash of Eleftheria I Thanatos (freedom or death).

Then came the Ataturk supporters with their letters praising the man and following in its wake were those writers' justifiably or otherwise criticising Ataturk's pro-western stance, his Jewish heritage and Turkey's place in the world.

Did you know that the Greeks almost liberated Asia Minor? Or that Ataturk was of a Jewish sect? I didn't but I found out all this in the past few weeks in the letter's page.

One of the great benefits of this argument is the question of where do we draw the line? Like Turkey do we enshrine secularism in our constitution to be enforced by the Army or do we try to include our Islamic heritage into our nation? Regardless of my opinion on the matter, these are justifiable questions for our country as it is for Turkey or any other Muslim country, whether they wish to call themselves Muslims or not.

In Turkey it is a crime to insult Kemal Ataturk, secularism, Islam, the security forces, and the President. The Criminal Code provides penalties for those who "insult the President, the Parliament, and the army," ranging from a 3-year minimum sentence for insulting the President to a 6-year maximum for insulting other branches of government i.e. the army.

The Anti-Terror Law, provides that "written and oral propaganda...aiming at damaging the indivisible unity of the State of the Turkish Republic...(is) forbidden, regardless of the method, intention and ideas behind it."

Emile
Dhaka

Army comes cheaper

This is in regards to the letter (July 21) by Hassan on corruption in the government and our army budget.

Without a doubt Hassan is not guilty of exaggeration when he says that the money wasted away in corruption could pay for the entire army. Rather he is guilty of understating the facts. If we were to halve corruption our country would probably be twice as rich.

I am however surprised why he thinks I hate the army. All I have ever done is criticise waste, corruption and arrogance. The perception in our country is that the army is beyond criticism, that it is above civil law and control and to do otherwise is treasonous. Like it or not a democracy means that the military is subservient to the civilian administration and subject to public debate. These twin pillars of governance I do advocate.

One thing should be said though, far as I have seen, an honest civil service officer is an exception to the rule, whereas an honest army officer is still a more prevalent species. What mitigating factors influence that I don't know, although esprit de corps and generous benefits certainly help keep army officers honest.

Coming back to the lack of debate, one thing that does strike

me as odd is the lack of a feeling of ownership by our fellow citizens. Our outrage at the government's follies like the MIG purchase seems restrained. I think however that will soon change. With Saifur Rahman corraling more and more new tax payers into the net, the number of people with a sense of ownership is bound to increase.

Mr Hassan I do not hate the army. All I want is public debate on its role and boundaries.

MA
Dhaka

This is in response to Mr Hasan's letter (July 22). According to Mr. Hasan's view army is useless and should be scrapped as they cannot protect our country because plus the nation cannot afford such a large army.

To support his view he presented some examples like once in Khaleda Zia's rule Burma attacked and killed 14 of our armed forces. Interestingly the writer did not mention whether those 14 members belonged to Army or BDR? We all know that those 14 persons died belonged to BDR. This was actually the BDR's fault, then why is the whole army should be blamed and termed useless?

Of course you can argue that officers of the BDR come from army

and therefore they were responsible for the death of 14 BDR members. If Mr. Hasan thinks that his example is enough to scrap the Army, I have another example to present for which I can demand the existence of Bangladesh Army in this soil forever. During Awami League's rule around 300 BSF of India attacked a BDR Chowki in Raumarri where only 22 BDR members were present. The ultimate result was the defeat of BSF. Only 22 BDR members defeated a large number of BSF intruders killing 16 and injuring around 50 of them. Now the point is if Mr. Hasan knows the attack of Burma he should also know the incident of BSF then why did he carefully avoided mentioning that in his letter?

According to recent report of Transparency International, the government officials of civil administration swallowed 11,000 crore taka last year. Though we are one of the poorest nations if we can afford to keep this highly corrupt civil administration why can't we afford to keep the army? So which government entity do we scrape first Civil Administration or Army?

A citizen
Dhaka

This is in reference to Mr. Biggles last letter where he was thumping

his chest claiming of being on the right track with his arguments against eliminating our armed forces.

MIGs do not fit our defence scenario because of financial reason. MIGs were proved to be very expensive to maintain. I have no idea why the previous government bought these planes if they lacked the resources to maintain them. There is an allegation of a serious financial malpractice in the MIG deal. Now is the writer ready to grudgingly give the parties, responsible for MIG deal, their dues for having done an obnoxious thing by stealing Tk.300 crore from the deal?

You were the most vilified contributor to this page not because of your argument against MIGs but because of your insane view of eliminating our armed forces.

United States of America discarded the "Crusader" 155mm howitzer project a few days ago by saying it was not appropriate for the country's defence requirement. Does that mean America should go ahead and abolish its army and replace it with a militia force? A weapon platform may be rejected for various reasons. If one does not fit then we have to find that will.

America discouraged us to buy the MIGs because it wants to make sure that the countries in the South and South East Asia use only American weapons for better interoperability. America has a long-term interest in this region and definitely doesn't want to see Russia make a way into this region.

Maruf
New Orleans, USA

AC bus on Mirpur route

A few months ago, GreenLine introduced an AC bus service in the Mirpur-Motijheel route. It became very popular with the commuters especially those who work in Motijheel and live in Mirpur. The buses were comfortable and the attendants were well behaved. It was a huge relief for all of us. But our good times were cut short without any notice only three months after the introduction of this service, bringing misery to the office goers and all.

The condition of the so-called mini-buses in this route is very poor. Auto-rickshaws are not safe, not only because of their reckless driving but also you have to watch out for the muggers. The cost of availing yellow cabs is too high.

I request the Communications Minister to kindly look into this and re-introduce AC bus service in this route for the convenience of the people of Mirpur.

Parvez Murshed
Mirpur, Dhaka

Khaleda invites AL

I was glad to see the news item "Khaleda invites AL". Good gesture indeed.

But at the same time I have read the news of Mr. Showkat Ali MP's arrest and your editorial on the same subject. I have also read about the number of cases filed against the AL workers. AL is also going to publish the number of their members killed in the last year.

It seems to me that the government will have to do a lot to improve the relationship with the main opposition party.

However, I hope this invitation is going to be the beginning of a decent political atmosphere in our country.

Waheed Nabi
Sheffield, England

BTV's Hey Presto on AL's hartal

Whenever Awami League calls a hartal on any pretext, BTV comes up with its magic wand to play its vital role. It plays its Hey Presto, the speeches of the former Prime Minister, now the Leader of the Opposition, Sheikh Hasina against hartal almost ceaselessly compelling the viewers to turn off their TV sets.

In her speeches, as it is shown, she mainly urges the then Leader of the Opposition Begum Khaleda Zia to withdraw hartal. What we see more is she promising AL would never call hartal in future, whether

they were in power or out of power. A similar agreement was made by both of the leaders (AL and BNP) during former US President Jimmy Carter's visit in Bangladesh in August 2001, prior to the October 1 general election.

If the BTV is outbidding those rignarole into the heads of the viewers to flare up their hatred against Sheikh Hasina or score her off in public, it must be considered as an undemocratic move. If it is to remind Sheikh Hasina of her promises or score a point (by BTV) in the eyes of the government then it is foolishness. And if it is an effort to run

behind this are:
 a. Mistakes in application forms.
 b. Wrong job selection and
 c. Lack of necessary training.
 There is a lack of immigration lawyers in the country. As a result most of the DV applicants show the working experience, which the previous DV winners had showed. So DV applicants do not get the appropriate guidance.

The national occupation code is changing, and it is updated each year in the visa centre. So it is essential to collect the latest national service codebook that will help the DV winners to select suitable jobs.

Statement of DU teachers and student politics



Is it student politics or criminal politics?

Ban is a word, which makes us feel dizzy, no matter why it is imposed, so we are not surprised seeing some of the DU teachers condemning the ban on politics in BUET.

My opinion is that, sweep clean the politics or the so-called competing political ideologies, as described by those DU teachers, from our campus. The students who are interested in politics, let them get involved in it, to their hearts' content, after the completion of their education. Their abstention from politics for mere six years, from intermediate to master's degree or equivalent, will harm little to the politics of this country. If some of them really get impatient to do politics, let them do it outside campus, becoming members of any of the political parties of their choice. Educational institutions are to confer academic education to the student, not to get them involved in politics.

The blue teachers of the DU have condemned the ban on student politics in BUET, and the white teachers, have kept mum on the issue, because it is the BNP government, which is now in power. If it were AL government in power, the same thing would have been happened but in a reverse way. This is the open secret bankruptcy of our politics. This bankruptcy has caused the decay to our student politics.

A decayed tooth is to be drawn off, so the so-called student politics in Bangladesh, which is not of the student, by the student, for the student.

Faruque Hasan
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

Notwithstanding the virulent criticisms, this brave step on the part of BUET Academic Council, stands tall, can have far reaching affirmative effect in the current malaise of our educational milieu. If things go well with BUET, I bet other educational institutions shall institute similar measures.

It is our hope that the government and the people will do the best to keep the nefarious hands of the political nemesis.

Mohammad Zaman
USA

BUET bans student politics. I welcome the decision from the core of my heart. From now on Pias, my daughter hopefully would be able to attend her class confidently, sleep peacefully when she's in the hostel, laboratory work proudly and can walk in the campus safely. I am thankful to the authority for this timely decision.

But what will happen to my other three studying in Chittagong

University, Dhaka University and Chittagong Medical College? If the gunmen keep their control on all these campuses, how can I feel safe to send my kids to those campuses? For the government each university may have different kind of values, but for me all my four kids are the same. Why not ban politics from all the university campuses?

Haroon Rashid
Agrabad Access Road, Chittagong

Like many others, I am also a victim of student politics. Most of us are against this negative politics but are we really doing anything to get rid of this cancerous cell?

The responsibility largely lies with the students. They are the one who take initiative to ban student politics. Otherwise more innocent students like Sony will die and we will have to arrange more mourning processions. And that will not really help us.

I request all the students to unite and launch a movement against student politics. We must ask ourselves do we really need student politics?

Tuhin
DU

Recently a few politicians are asking for ban on student politics. Let us examine what role student politics played in the history of Bangladesh. During the language movement of 1952, students under the leadership of "Bhasha Sainik" Abdul Matin and his co-committee members played a valiant role to establish Bengali as the state language. Politicians were mostly hesitant to confront the reactionary Muslim League regime. Then in the late '60s, students again played a heroic role in opposing reactionary autocratic rules and fighting for people's causes.

After emergence of Bangladesh student politics however started getting criminalised. In order to perpetuate autocratic rule and thwart opposition to exploitation by party machinery, Awami League institutionalised armed cadre based student politics. One early action of such terror student groups was voiding of the 1973 DUCSU election results. After 1975 BNP followed suit. The armed student cadres in some cases change affiliation whenever governing switches from one party to another. The major political parties have kept using those armed groups to further their own interests. The armed groups are now involved with all kinds of heinous crimes including extortion, murder, forcibly securing tender etc.

Right now therefore there is a bigger need for exposing faces of armed student groups and their masters in all spheres of our society. Only progressive student organisations can be entrusted with this onerous task when the country has been subjected to most vicious, primitive, autocratic, exploitative rule by the communal reactionary ruling gang. The country's rulers are afraid of progressive student organisations since such groups have always been impediment to establishment of autocratic family dynasties. The progressive student organisations will oppose any such ban on student politics and continue to play a heroic role in opposing reactionary autocratic rules and fighting for people's causes.

M Smith
On e-mail

they were trying to break the strike. Not only should the government not fold on this, the cable operators should also be required to deduct the value of the number of days they were on strike from their monthly bill. As it stands most of us will be forced to pay the full monthly bill, in effect subsidising the strike by these extortionists.

I think Mr. Abul Khair Litu, along with the few decent providers, should go ahead and start his own cable service bypassing all these gangsters.

This is a litmus test for our government. Will BNP fold as usual or up the ante by investigating these extortionists run businesses?

Shonku
Dhaka

I think I am with Abul Khair Litu on the issue with the cable operators. It is so typical of Bangladesh that when we see someone making money we want to get a cut or destroy everything.

This current strike by the operators is only the second instalment of the controversy running for some time now. Earlier the cable operators hoodwinked the gullible naive minister into banning the same channels that are represented by Nationwide Communications. That was also a blatant move to try and muscle into Nationwide's busi-

ness. I also find it very suspicious that nowhere in the list of demands by these operators are they asking for help against extortionists. Here is Shewparua, our famous extortionist and local gangster Shahin, demanded five lakhs from the cable operator or he'd shut him down. We had no cable for about a month before the operator caved in.

I rather suspect that extortionists have taken control of most if not all the cable operators. I am doubly sure of this because Prisma, the best service provider I've seen in Dhaka, had their cables cut because

On World Bank

Your columnist Afsan Chowdhury has really attacked an outfit not used to being criticised so openly and some would say in somewhat questionable taste. But it's refreshingly different from the servile language of the bureaucrats, economists, consultants and NGOs of this and other developing country. But in attacking the World Bank, who is regularly quoted as a critic he has let go of the real 'villain in the piece', the outfit called IMF.

Remember that Stiglitz is actually friendly towards the Bank. It was his increasingly outspoken attacks on the IMF as the Chief economist at the World Bank, which contributed to his departure in January 2000. It seems that no less than the US Treasury Secretary demanded that Stiglitz had to go. But he is not the only one. There is a long list of Bank staff that had to leave because the US lobby didn't like what they were saying or doing.

Power lies with the IMF but WB, the poor and younger brother of the Bretton Woods pact gets the flack because it has a high profile. The damage is done by the moneylender in the truest sense, IMF. Even in Bangladesh, few know where IMF's office is or who leads it. Nor does anybody see it except when Finance Ministry officials stand in front of them with folded hands and its all on TV. Why? Because they lend money at critical times like when BD foreign exchange reserve dipped desperately low. But although Bangladesh was extremely servile it still didn't get it.

Stiglitz survived as an IMF critic because he is an American and he mentions IMF made two big errors in the 1990s. In an interview given to the Guardian of London he mentions them.

"The first was to bow to Wall Street's demand for new markets, by making IMF loans conditional on countries opening up their financial sectors. The resulting rise in speculative capital flows has proved disastrous for fragile economies. At the first sign of trouble, foreign investors pull out. At the height of the Asian crisis, some countries faced capital outflows of more than

10 per cent of GDP. The second error was to prescribe a mix of fiscal austerity and high interest rates for the countries in the speculators' firing line. Calling on countries running healthy budget surpluses to tighten their belts only intensified the recession. Meanwhile, raising interest rates to protect their currencies did not succeed in warding off the speculators and simply intensified the pain for domestic firms." The Guardian notes further:

"The IMF says it has learnt from the Asian crisis, but Mr Stiglitz says it has repeated all the same mistakes during the latest collapse in Argentina and is now trying to shift the blame to the government."

"The image they are painting is of a country which has been completely profligate - but even near the end Argentina's deficit was only 3% of GDP," Stiglitz says, "The US had a 4.9% deficit ratio in 1992 during a much milder recession."

"I thought they were giving them a really bum rap. They made the same mistake as they did in East Asia, which is pushing extremely contradictory fiscal policies on a country in recession. And then they said that if Argentina only stick to it long enough, it'll eventually recover."

Stiglitz adds that this is part of the reason why the IMF is trapped in what he calls "market fundamentalism". It is because the US dominates it, and its treasury is in thrall to Wall Street's interests.

"I think the anti-globalisation movement has done a huge

service in bringing into the open a series of issues which have really had too little attention. In the developing world people were very aware of all these problems and injustices, but in the United States and Europe, particularly the United States, these issues were just not on the radar screen."

A review showed that the only two countries benefited from any connection with the World Bank. One was China and the other Botswana. And neither had paid any heed to the Bank's advice. Or was it Stiglitz who said that?

Raihan Gafoor
Motijheel, Dhaka

Afsan Chowdhury's topics for talking are very unusual and straightforward.

Poor Shamsheer Chowdhury from Texas (July 21). Such an apologist for an organisation that is not considered respectable anywhere in the developing world except in the corridors of failing governments.

Thanks Afsan Chowdhury for saying what should have been said 20 years ago. And Mr Shamsheer, please read up any site on the net and find out about the Bank. How come more than half of its projects fail even after getting a guarantee which forces the poor to pay the salaries of the people he cheers so much but has made more defaulting loans than any Bangladesh bank..

Farhat binte Faquir
Gulshan Avenue, Dhaka

How to Measure Poverty?



World Bank: Better than IMF?