

How can we respect our teachers?



The Greatest Respect of All...

Teacher-student relationship

It is sad to see that our educational institutions and academic environments are now hijacked by the so-called "student" leaders and politically motivated "teachers." These "students" and "teachers" aim in life is not education or research but to use their self-proclaimed "leadership" role to gain political advantage over their political opponents.

I was a student of Dhaka University and I have the opportunity of completing my graduate study from a US university. I know how we were exploited and neglected by our teachers back home. Most of our teachers at DU never came to the class prepared. The senior ones were the worst of the lot. They didn't even bother to come to the class most of the time. Who will become first class first and second and so on used to be decided by which lobby is backing those students. The "favourite" students used to get final version of the question papers several days ahead of the exam. I have stopped respecting these so-called teachers who sacrifice the students' future for their personal gain. And that was 10 or so years ago. I am sure the situation got worse since then.

After coming to USA the first thing that struck me was that every thing here moved on time. We could approach our teachers whenever we needed them. The teachers came to the class on time. They were well prepared for the class. Exams were held on time and the gradings were fair. The university's focus was betterment of the student future.

Most of our so-called university teachers are very much familiar with the academic environments of the western universities. But probably they have made a conscious decision not to benefit our students from their experience. May be they went back to Bangladesh because they knew that only in Bangladesh they can exploit the students.

Sherif Saeed
New Jersey, USA

The most corrupt nation status and our political leaders

Twice successively we have had the opportunity to occupy the 'prestigious' number one position on the list of the ten most corrupt nations in the world, published by the Transparency International. It is noticeable in the list that corruption and poverty are correlated. The poor a country is, the more corrupt it is. Corruption level is very high in poor countries like ours, for most of the political leaders of these countries are corrupt to the bone. They are so obsessed with amassing wealth that they are ready to go to any extent to fulfill that purpose.

How much money is needed for a person to lead a most luxurious life as long as s/he is alive, Taka 20 crore, 30 crore? Some of these political leaders are so fabulously rich that even the imagination of lay people fails to conceive that.

When some one earns wealth through his diligence and business acumen, that person is commendable. When a person earns wealth through dishonesty, s/he is condemnable.

When political leaders of a country, who run a government and in the opposition, are corrupt, then corrupt is the whole system of that country as well.

Faruque Hasan
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

Congratulation Mr. President

Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed has been elected as the 18th President of the people's republic of Bangladesh. Our heartfelt congratulations on his assumption to the presidency. We also thank our present government for electing a non-party and neutral person to the highest post of the country.

In our present form of government the President has no executive power. He has to work upon the Prime Minister's advice. Yet our past President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed tried his best to oppose many undemocratic and unwise decision of the then government and he had to face criticism from the

AL. The way the immediate past President Professor B. Chy exit the Bangabhaban it is very unfortunate. Though the President is only a ceremonial post yet it's an institution. Everybody should honour the post. But it is fact that we measurably failed to honour the Presidency.

In this respect our political leader should take a note on the following points:
1. The Presidency is an institute needs to be upheld for the greater interest of the country.
2. The Presidency should not be politicised and the President should be allowed to work at his discretion.
3. The President's executive power may be increased after necessary amendments of the constitution. So that he can contribute in nation building activities more effectively.

MH Bari
Khulna

Modern jails

It is very good to know that the Law Ministry is considering to improve jail conditions. Not only are the prisons overcrowded but the rights of the inmates are absolutely ignored. I just hope that we see some changes soon.

Rumana
Canada

"Dream of a clean city"

I express my support for the letter appearing on 9th September, though our beloved city is the dirtiest amongst all others I had the opportunity to visit.

Actually just by wishing to keep the premises clean will not work. The city managers (if there are any) should implement certain measures for the same. In most roads the footpaths are either crowded with hawkers or used as extension of the shops or for car parking or for piling up with garbage.

The occupants of the premises should be penalised if the frontage is not kept clean and free from obstructions. The dirt can be kept in small bins in front for cleaning by the corporation cleaners. We must do away with the large garbage bins, which are more of a nuisance than

any help to cleanliness.

MAH
Dhaka

Regarding MiG-29s

Our territory is large enough to handle supersonic fighters. Thanks to some readers to point out about the Israeli F-15s and F-16s. Even the tiny city-nation of Singapore maintains a decent number of F-16s. These fighters fly at subsonic speeds most of the time ... but they also have the capability to go supersonic when needed (say, it is intercepting another aircraft far away ... or it is faced with another supersonic fighter). Defence forces are designed based on threat perception. So in this case, we need aircraft capable of handling these attacks.

If we have an airforce at all, it should be modern, capable, and lethal. A single squadron of well-armed and well-maintained MiG-29s is much better than five squadrons of rickety rockets like F-7s or A-5s. If the MiG-29s purchase was faulty, punish the guilty ... but BAF should not pay the price. We should buy armaments and spare parts for the modern aircraft and sell the old aircraft instead, which are fit only for making loud bangs on our skies and escorting foreign dignitaries entering our airspace.

If we didn't have any enemy (as some mention here), why have the airforce at all? In that case, we should sell all the fighters and just maintain a fleet of helicopters... which would be of immense help for police, civil defence, or during natural calamities. But if we maintain a minimum defence force, it should be capable of doing its job properly.

Shafiq
USA

"War of hypocrisy!"

What on earth is Mr Mahmood Elahi of Toronto talking about in his ambiguous ranting of the evils of Saddam Hussain (DS-9/9/02)? Does he honestly believe that the United States will be doing the world a favour by eliminating the Iraqi President and ridding the earth of all wrongdoing? Mr Elahi, you are a victim of overexposure from Media

the country. As again such "claims" were never substantiated with evidences by any independent organisations.

Such lies continue to build up, in order to justify an onslaught on Iraq. Unashamedly, Bush and Blair are circulating blatant lies to justify the attack on Iraq. There were references made by them to the fictitious report on Iraq's nuclear sites. IAEA have confirmed that there are no satellite photos, reports or any other form of credible evidences to indicate that Iraq is engaged in the development of nuclear weapons.

Lies can be blatant untruths like the recent statement of Bush, or it can be in the form of promises that were never intended to mean anything. It can also be in the form false claims as made by Bill Clinton. There exist also other type of lie and its chief architect is the mass media. Every time the US media machine launches an accusation, we do not witness the response from Iraq or any other Arab country. Consequently, over a period of time, broadcasts of such unchallenged or unsubstantiated accusations become facts in the minds of many.

Yamin Zakaria
UK, London

Pleasant surprises at Bangladesh Missions

I write to express my pleasant surprise at a couple of very positive experiences my wife and I have had in our recent interactions with Bangladesh missions in the US and the UK.

About seven weeks ago I had to get some legal documents endorsed. As part of my preparation, I alerted the receptionist at the Bangladesh Embassy in DC, a day

and documents and getting them back it apparently took her only 90 minutes.

But I had the biggest surprise two weeks ago. Having sent in an application for a new passport, from 3000 miles away, on a Wednesday afternoon along with the fee for an expedited service, I was shocked to receive my new passport first thing on the Friday morning! Okay, part of the credit goes to FedEx, but a helpful attitude combined with the detailed responses that I seemed to get from both the reception lady and the First Secretary for Consular Affairs were truly remarkable. Needless to say, that a service such as this goes a long way to create a lasting positive impression. I am actually feeling very proud to be a Bangladeshi.

Shabbir A. Bashir, Ph.D.
San Jose, CA, USA

Gas export

Let us not succumb to the threats from outside and inside regarding use of our meagre natural resources. In the first place, why lay expensive pipelines for gas to the western part of our country, when we can easily produce electricity by gas turbines near the source of gas and then send electricity to the western region using existing electric transmission lines. In any case, gas will only last another 30 or so years. Won't these expensive pipelines become useless then? Export of gas is out of the question. Let us produce more electricity with gas, so that we can provide cheaper power to our industries - thereby reducing prices of our national products, which face undue competition from imported and smuggled foreign products. Meanwhile, before the gas runs out,

more?

The price of gas has increased by 25%. The government has the right to increase the price if it deems necessary. I have no objection to that.

However my concern is I have to pay more because of some inefficient management. It is not my fault that Titas or Bakharabad has a systems loss close to 30%. Why do we have to pay for the organisation's deep-rooted corruption? Why isn't the government taking necessary steps to reduce the so-called systems loss?

After reducing the systems loss if the government still needs to increase the cost then I don't have any problem with paying more but not before they make an attempt to uproot corruption that has long been prevailing in this sector.

Mohammad Shakil Akther
BUET, Dhaka

"Great Army"

This is in reference to Mr Rashid Chowdhury's letter (September 11). One gun for four soldiers?

I talked to many who joined the mission in Bosnia. The information is outright ridiculous and incorrect.

A Man in Uniform
Dhaka

This letter is in response to Rashid Chowdhury's letter. The letter writer stated that there was one rifle for four Bangladeshi soldiers stationed in Bosnia as part of the UN Mission several years ago. This news reminds me of a story I heard a few years ago.

China has a HUGE population and an appropriate HUGE army. Unfortunately, they were not always proportionately rich. The story goes,

"Voicing the commuter's agony"

I write further to Tommy's letter (September 4). I wholeheartedly agree that rickshaws have been a blessing for Bangladesh for many years. I am, however, saddened by the way in which these vehicles are under-valued and considered unworthy for travel by certain sections of the community. It is all the more surprising to note that such attitudes prevail in a country where the majority of the population is unable to afford motorised vehicles of any kind. Surely a rickshaw pedalled by a trained driver is safe, cheap and most importantly, in view of the noxious fumes emanating from most vehicles that ply the streets of Dhaka, environment-friendly.

Well-planned and monitored rickshaw lanes, proper rain guards and strict limits on passengers should be encouraged and, dare I suggest, subsidised by the transport authorities. One must also bear in mind the fact that rick-



Rickshaw: The neglected transport

shaw driving provides employment to many men who are unable to acquire other skills. It cannot be beyond the capabilities of Bangladeshi engineers and planners to devise new and better designs for rickshaws and to introduce radical concepts to urban roads. Construction of Western-style highway structures and the reliance on fuel-guzzling vehi-

cles will not alleviate the daily misery faced by millions of commuters in terms of unaffordable transport and deadly pollution. The imposition of "VIP" status on certain roads is, by the way, discriminatory and reprehensible.

Mita Chowdhury
Guernsey, Channel Islands

before of my overnight travel plans. Not only did she meticulously remind me of every piece of document I had to bring and the necessary fees for the endorsement, but also she seemed to have had informed the officer concerned judging by how swiftly and smoothly things progressed once I arrived the next morning. My wife also had a similar experience at the Consular Section of the Bangladesh High Commission in London that week. From submitting applications, fees

let us develop projects to harness the abundant renewable forces of nature like wind, waves, solar and hydropower to produce electricity - which can still be transmitted to all regions of our country using the same and maybe some additional power transmission lines. Let our national experts have the final say on this matter, instead of our politicians and bureaucrats.

K. Sayeed, Dhaka
Why should I pay

China on some great Chinese war several decades ago were being massacred by the enemy. After a while, all the guns of China were lost. Interestingly, not all the soldiers were lost though. So, the Chinese military sent its soldiers without guns to the battle ordering them to collect weapons from their dead compatriots in the battlefield. Eventually, the enemy was defeated.

It concerns me to learn that Bangladeshi soldiers in past UN missions did not have adequate

"The BUET mess"

The Daily Star editorial of September 10 regarding the mess in BUET is indeed a very realistic evaluation of the situation. Being a student of the University I have observed different types of politics being played during this whole episode. Nobody has the right to take law in his/her own hand nor anybody is above law. We all try to conveniently forget this while playing the destructive game for personal gains or ego. My fellow students acted as pawns in the hands of some vested quarters of both within and outside the university. The press also did not play their role in a responsible way.

The University administration as well as the demonstrating students were unnecessarily rigid and we the majority of general students watched helplessly how the situation deteriorated. There was no role or situation for the police as has been rightly pointed out in the editorial. We have painfully seen some over enthusiastic intellectuals of the country openly playing destructive role instead of mending the differences as has been expected from them. Dangerous people are those who did not come in the surface and played havoc behind the scene and perhaps the authorities relied on them without actually knowing their intentions. It is hard to believe that some of them are our senior teachers, who backstabbed both the students and the administration to satisfy their petty interest.

I don't know how the University Ordinance is related to student's interest. As a matter of fact the students are allowed in the ordinance to form union to safeguard their own interest and not to work for political parties. Interestingly in the BUET Ordinance, teachers are not allowed to form association but we have watched with dismay that teachers are speaking along side the administration. Is this not an act of hypocrisy and discrimination? Many of our teachers often act undemocratically and too autocratically with the students. They get engaged in consultancy privately and through BRTC (which itself is against the Ordinance) and don't take classes regularly or seriously but blame the students for session jams. There was actually no serious issue during this turmoil but definitely there were suppressed emotions among the students for various reasons that were successfully used by different groups. We lose important academic years and we, the poor general students are always the sufferers.

A student of BUET, Dhaka



In the name of education

I would like to congratulate you for your editorial where an honest effort has been made to analyse the problem from all angles.

Your assessment that the VC was wrong in calling the police as apparently there was no reported violence in the events on Sunday that necessitated the use of such force needs further analysis. As far as I could gather from the reports, hundreds of angry students had gheraoed the office of the VC, locked him inside a room, cut off all telephone lines and issued an one hour ultimatum to meet the students' demand or face dire consequences. Was this not enough to initiate a call from any normal human being for help?

The question of whether the police has used excessive force is entirely a different matter to be sorted out and necessary action to be taken by the authorities concerned. Our police force, time and again, is being accused of using excessive force. We really have to question their training and preparedness to handle any situation.

The crucial point in this whole unnecessary and uncalled for episode is your statement that "We must examine whether or not

the students have exacerbated the situation by being unreasonable". If the answer is yes, what then? For good order's sake, let us have an inquiry and publish the findings to the public. While on this subject, I as a parent would love to see you publish interviews of the parents of the students who are agitating and in particular, the parents of the students who were on hunger strike and ready to die for their cause.

I am disappointed with your conclusion about the incorrectness of the police to solve student problems. May be the solution would be for every university to have armed battalion of its own forces to quell student agitation, is that the solution? In every civilised society, the police force is entrusted with responsibility of law and order. It is the fundamental right of every citizen to call the police for help.

I would like to thank "Kim" for his letter about student politics, which I believe says it all.

A Thinker, Dhaka

First Shamsunnahar Hall, now BUET. This may be a pensive initiation to picture the latest scenario of student movements in our country. Both the incidents have lots of resemblance, from the way the authorities manhandled the matters, to the police excesses and finally closing down the institution sine die. The authorities, at the first instances, said that there were some handful of students with affiliation to some particular parties (mainly the student wing of the opposition) creating unrest in the peaceful academic atmosphere and they wanted to calm them down with heavy hands. But finally we have seen that the consequent agitation programs were being commenced in the banner of "general students" of whom the authorities had failed to grasp the sentiments. Finally the DU VC had to pay the price; let's see what happens to BUET VC.

I want to emphasise on the active motivations that prompted the "general students" to resort to such agitation. Why were the students undertaking some obstinate movements for demonstration against the authority? Why did they undertake "fast unto death" for their demands to be met? Or why were the female students demonstrating at the dead of night, which generally is uncommon, in our country? In both cases, we have seen some sort of stubbornness, some kind of desperation among the students, which, generally, is not common among the "general students". In both cases, the student wings of the opposition were among the "gen-

eral students" without posturing themselves and the ruling party students' wing was trying to subvert the ongoing programs. I do not undermine the issues for which the students had fought for and I also condemn the heinous police excesses in the campus, but I just wonder why the students became unyielding in both the cases.

We always have noticed mistrust and condescension among our political parties. Whenever one party goes to power, the opposition opts for unrest in the country anyway to show that the ruling party has stabilised the situations. If they can establish that it was not the opposition but the "general students" out there to demonstrate and to be justified by the ruling party, their political benefit will be manifold as the ruling party was inadvertently shoving not only the opposition but anyone who stand against them.

Another frustrating thought that comes with the incidents is, the students did not have minimal faith on their respective university authorities. They believed that if they just had talked about their problems with the authorities or just had submitted a "memorandum", nothing would have happened. They thought that they must have to go for harsh movements like "fast unto death" or some demonstration at the dead of night. In both the cases the reactions of the authorities were, of course, more condemnable.

Mohammad Nazmul Islam
Tokyo, Japan

By failing to control and curb activities that led to the death of Sony and then continuing with politicians, police and the student factions of the current government to attack students who are demanding nothing more than the banning of political violence on campus and the prosecution of the killers of Sony, the VC has presented himself as nothing but a failed VC.

The VC, by his actions has not only failed as an educator, but has also failed as a leader. If he has any sense of dignity he should resign immediately.

I applaud the students who have come forward to challenge the role of the VC and his immoral cohorts. In the history of Bangladesh the students have played significant and pioneering roles in defeating the tyranny. I hope they will not stop short of their objectives this time.

Chandan Ali
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

number of weapons. I hope like China today, Bangladesh too has progressed to a position to provide necessary equipment to all the soldiers. If not, Bangladesh military should make necessary arrangements to ensure this.

Here's my best wishes to the Bangladesh army! Keep up the good work.

AA, California, USA

Rashid Chowdhury should have included the URL of the website where he read about under-equipped Bangladeshi soldiers. Both the critics and the supporters of our army would be quite interested.

MA, Dhaka

English vs Bangla medium and patriotism

I was impressed by Mr. Altaf Hussain's keen observation on the Bangla medium-English medium issue (September 10).

He is absolutely right. English medium students do not join the civil service or the army because they prefer to work in the private sector or just leave the country and work abroad. They do not have an iota of patriotism in their blood.

The Bangla medium students nowadays have become the symbol of patriotism. They join the civil service. Then, in the spirit of patriotism, most of them bribe high officials to transfer them to the capital city Dhaka. If this attempt fails, they abandon their assigned posts in other districts, spend their days in frustration and leisurely collect their salaries at the end of the month. Obviously, Mr. Altaf Hussain views this as patriotism. I would call this hypocritical.

The English medium students do not have to announce themselves as patriotic citizens. They prove it by not being hypocritical. At least they have the honesty to admit that they want a better life whether they find it in their own country or abroad.

Farhanaz Rabbani
On e-mail

The long lasting debate on English versus Bengali medium schools had turned sterile and repetitious and I had refrained from contributing further. What prompts me to make a rejoinder, however, is an utterly uncalled for comment by a reader who questioned the patriotism of students from English medium schools. Such debased commentary is unacceptable even in the most heated of debates though, unfortunately, quite in vogue in the political discourse of our society.

Yes, many of the English medium graduates end up abroad. Many prefer private sector and multinational jobs. Those who are abroad often use their edge in English to present Bangladesh's case to the locals, the media, and policymakers. At least one individual I know from my old school writes like a pro in the op-ed pages of journals in six or seven different countries! I have myself met members of the United States Congress on several occasions to make them better informed about Bangladesh, its trade issues, and its needs. Others working for the private sector in Bangladesh have helped build the commercial infrastructure of the impoverished nation. What is unpatriotic about that?

I went to Maple Leaf International School and it stood me in good stead throughout. If anything, that sterling education made a better representative of Bangladesh.

ES
Missouri, USA