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Woes of a Bangladeshi student

I am writing this letter to let everybody know what kind of service we are getting from the Bangladesh High Commission in Canada.

I am a student and has been in Canada for the last five years. Recently, somebody broke into my apartment and stole jewellery, some cash, my Bangladeshi passport, and my student authorisation paper. I reported to the police.

Since, I am an expatriate student, I need a new passport. I made a phone call to our High Commission at Ottawa and they told me to go there in order to get a new passport. That was a bit inconvenient for me as the place I am studying in is more than 800km away from Ottawa. But to my surprise, I was told that to get a new passport I have to submit my educational certificates (I don't know why) and my birth certificate. And they have to be verified by the education ministry in Bangladesh. I do not know how I can send my certificates to Bangladesh and get them verified. This is a nice example of *amla tantrik jolota* (bureaucratic tangle). I am really frustrated about this process.

Just to let you know that I even got the USA visa by mail, I renewed my student authorisation twice by regular mail. Nobody asked me to submit my educational certificates. Is it not enough that I am a Bangladeshi citizen and have my birth certificate and the original copies of my educational certificates?

I would like to urge the authorities concerned to make the process of issuing new passports easier and simpler for all Bangladeshis. We need better service from our high commissions abroad.

A sufferer
Canada

Cell phones

The number of mobile users in Bangladesh is surely a huge one. But the number of mobile service providers is not that many. The companies are concentrating more on advertisement and increment of customers, than quality and customer service. This is true about almost all the companies engaged in this business.

The common problems with mobile companies of Bangladesh is their coverage area and network availability. They should install sufficient infrastructure before the number of subscribers cross the limit of their handling capacity. The second point is that the companies have to decrease their rate.

I wonder people in how many developing countries have to pay this much just to make a call. Hope we will get a good and decent service in a decent rate very soon.

Istiaque Uddin Rifat
Dept. of EEE, RUET

Non-government colleges

Principals and vice-principals of non-government colleges have their own pay scales prescribed by the government and some additional benefits such as free furnished quarters within the campus, entertainment allowance, charge allowance, telephone at office and residence, free transport etc. are their usual entitlements for holding the positions of principal and vice principal; but some college principals and vice-principals are found to enjoy some extra financial advantages in the name of 'ex-officio financial benefits' which are not covered by any government rule applicable to non-government colleges.

One such head of account from which principals and vice-principals draw an unusually heavy amount of money is the public examinations fund. It is relevant to mention here that principals are the centre-in-charge of all the public examinations held in a college by virtue of their position. An examination sub-committee is constituted for each public examination and the job of conducting the examination is mainly done by this sub-committee from the beginning to the end of the examination routine. Principals and vice-principals have practically got no specific function during the whole

Where is home?

It is supplementary to the views expressed in the DS Editorial of November 29 and subsequent article with above title (DS:12.02.2004). The inquiries regarding the status of urbanisation in Dhaka are indeed thought provoking. One's affiliation to his/her home town is a natural phenomenon in most of the Asiatic cities because of their way of life and the pattern of their familial and community relationships. A quote from Prof. Mowla of BUET (Asiatic Society Journal, 48(1), 2003, p146): "Almost every large Asian city has apparently owed half or more of its recent rapid growth to migration. In most Asian cities, migrants continue to maintain close ties with their rural origins and periodically return there. One may cite the common Indian and traditional Chinese practice of giving one's ancestral village as the place of origin or even of birth on the part of the people who are unambiguously urban" supports this notion.

The emotional attachment to one's home town is generally strongest when a person is a first generation urbanite, it gradually becomes weak in subsequent generations but is never wholly obliterated as can be seen in "The Roots". It is perhaps an indefinable human instinct that creates this nostalgic feeling towards one's ancestral place. The author of "Where is home?" tried to identify the reasons for this affiliation in terms of personal, emotional, professional, economic, nationalistic, ideological or a combination, but I guess it is much more than just these ties. This is an intricate socio-spatial phenomenon that guides the whole process of place making. Pace and nature of urbanisation depends on human communities and their territoriality.

M. Tajuddin

period of examination excepting putting some signatures on some routine documents which require a few hours only. Major functions of these examinations are performed by the examination sub-committee and the general teachers; but while distributing the remuneration the principals are found to receive an amount much higher than the amount received by a member of the sub-committee and the general teachers.

It is also pertinent to note here that in an academic session as many as twenty public examinations, both internal and external, are held in a college centre, and there is a slim chance for a teacher to

M Sadeq
Chairman, Dept. of Management,

the examinations smoothly. The principals and vice-principals who have got to be paid some money for each and every examination should remain satisfied with a token amount in each bill which ultimately builds up a big amount accumulated during the whole academic year. It is not reasonable that in each and every examination bill the shares of the principals and vice-principals should always be higher than all others involved in conducting public examinations only on the pretext of ex-officio positions which have no precedence in any institution in this country.

farmers. Infection spreads through direct contact with pig secretion. Treatment is only supportive. The mortality rate is about 30% in this region. The disease was first suspected as Japanese viral encephalitis which is also endemic in Japan, China and Southeast Asia. It's also a fatal one. Japanese encephalitis virus is transmitted to the human body by Culex mosquitoes which are common in our rice fields. Birds and pigs are two primary hosts. It can only be detected by Immunofluorescence assays. The remedy is vaccination and eradication of mosquitoes by pesticides.

In this regard, I want to say something about the possibility of

diagnose such cases. No steps have yet been taken to find out the source. How did it spread in our country? Nobody can answer. The health authorities appear to be unperturbed.

I cannot imagine what will happen if other fatal viruses like SARS and Japanese encephalitis virus spread in our country. What will then our health policy makers do? Who will be responsible for that? I think it's more important to be prepared to combat such fatal diseases than spending so much energy on foiling hartaal called by the opposition.

Such neglect and ignorance may cause a major health disaster in our country. So it's time to think how we can prevent the emergence of these fatal viral diseases. Only a proper policy and implementation of it in vulnerable points can prevent the outbreak of such diseases and also save valuable lives.

Dr. Chowdhury Jalal Uddin
Mursheed Rumi
Medical Officer, Diabetic Hospital
Sylhet

Destroying trees

I was simply horrified to see the roundabout at Gulshan Circle 2 turned into a deprecated wasteland! As it is, Dhaka city is choking with pollution of all forms imaginable, and this tiny vestige of green oasis at Gulshan Circle 2 always piqued my senses. If this is another brilliant idea (like the outlandish magnetic train!) by our city planners to ease the traffic congestion, then I am truly speechless. I can only surmise that they (The Dhaka City Mayor's Office) are totally oblivious of concepts like "ecological balance" or "protecting the environment". While the rest of the world is going out of its way to protect every inch of grassland, we have decided to build a road where beautiful tall trees stood defiantly for decades -- in sharp contrast to the concrete monstrosity that Dhakaites have become all too familiar with. I am also surprised that The Daily Star has failed to create any awareness about this repugnant act right in the city.

I witnessed from my office window as the defenceless trees were mercilessly mutilated like cattle in a slaughterhouse. The episode is a travesty of the various environmental laws enacted by this government. As a conscientious friend lamented, "The trees will take revenge." They will.

A Farjad Ahmed
Rajshahi House, Maghbazar,
Dhaka

M Rubaiyat Kibria
University of Sydney, Australia

Our ministers

In civilised nations, the minister concerned usually takes the responsibility for any mishap concerning his/her ministry. But Bangladeshi ministers are really different! They would rather get greatly embarrassed, but never give up the portfolio of a minister.

Let's take a look at some of the incidents upon which any minister in a democratic country would have resigned:

The law and order situation is deteriorating, but there is a total indifference on the part of the minister concerned; rather there has been a hilarious decision to change the uniform of the police without addressing issues like their moral standing and the failure to nab top criminals who are believed to be patronised by politically influential godfathers.

What is pretty clear is that there is nobody to shoulder the responsibility of the failures.

There are many other examples of failures and corruption the alleged CNG import scandal, digging of newly renovated roads in the city for the purpose of laying Titan pipelines, removal of the Airport Road divider and then putting it back at the expense of tax payers. The repeated leakage of the BCS examination questions and all other public exam questions is another example of very poor performance on the part of the government agencies concerned. But there is no one to say that he is ready to take the responsibility.

I wonder if there would come a day when even in Bangladesh, a minister would take the blame for the inefficiency of his ministry and resign like they do even in our neighbouring India! Someone may argue with me that if all these learned people resign, then who would replace them? I sincerely believe that there are a lot of genuinely qualified people in Bangladesh who could replace them.

M Rubaiyat Kibria
University of Sydney, Australia

Hartaal syndrome

After bearing with more than 10 years of pathetic performance and ridiculous hartaal calls from our political parties, I think it is time for the nation to look for some viable solution to the problems being created by politics of violence and dislocation. The top leaders should address the issue in right earnest. They must not forget that people have begun to believe that they were better off under autocracy than the present democracy!

A lot of work has to be done to clear the administration of corruption and all sorts of malpractice. If the political parties fail to do the job, we may find it hard to sustain democratic order established in 1991 following a mass upsurge.

Asif
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

even by the engineers from Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (former BIT) -- which has always been ignored. Various power sectors are being monitored, maintained by home (Bangladeshi) engineers -- so why people are upset?

Many meritorious Bangladeshi students have shown their extraordinary performance abroad. But we've to remember that ours is an LDC, so there're huge problems in the field of science and technology. Nevertheless, we are conducting research in the fields of astronomy, software, IT etc.

I request the people not to be upset.

Md. Ariful Islam
Electrical Engg, Rajshahi
University of Engineering
And Technology

Ahamadiyya issue

Your newspaper keeps us abreast, in USA, with the latest religious fervent in Bangladesh. The prevalent intolerance against the minority Muslim group of Ahmadiyya ignited by fanatic mullahs is tantamount to terrorism.

The ban of Ahmadiyya literature is a sheer violation of human rights and contrary to the Constitution of the land, and as such it should be lifted. The murderers of Shah Alam, an Ahmadiyya, must be brought to justice. The introduction of blasphemy law holds no weight and should be rejected forthwith. This vicious trend and wave of hatred must be checked to save the country from plunging into chaos and turmoil.

The law of the land must be upheld irrespective of cast, creed, colour, faith and religious affiliation.

Your unbiased reporting is commendable and shows your courage and straightforwardness despite some opposition and pressure from various groups.

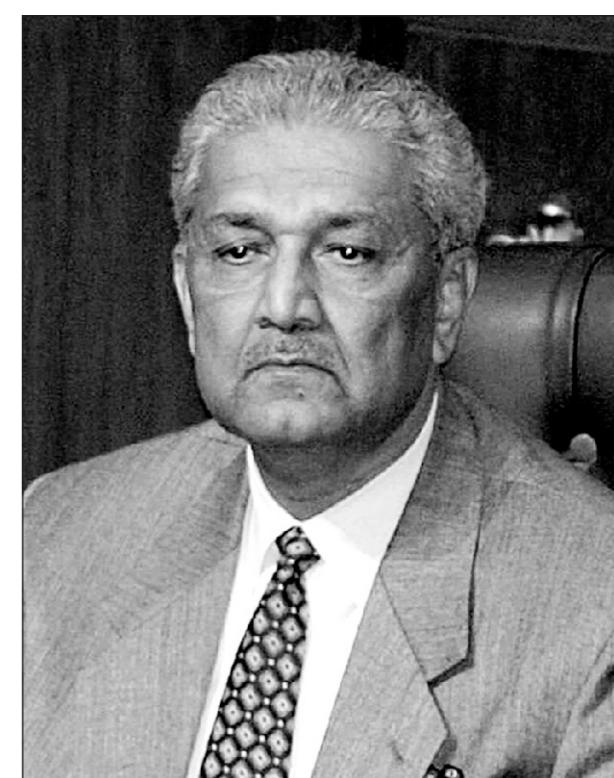
Kalimullah Khan

American Petroleum Institute,

Washington DC

Chandra Bose invented radio and microwave theory but it wasn't patented. Scientist Dr. Nazmul Huda invented fuel-less electricity (power), which hasn't been patented either -- so who's responsible for these lapses?

The ordinary people (folk) or even many educated people don't want to understand or acknowledge that the learners, scientific officers, engineers in the field of science, engineering and technology have made some contribution to this country. BAEC (Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission), SPARSO etc are being maintained by Bangladeshi engineers and scientists, as well as some foreigners,



AQ Khan

For one reason or the other, directly or indirectly, economically or politically, millions of people of OIC and SAARC countries are influenced or affected by Indo-Pakistan relations, Kashmir problem, India's making of atom bomb and Pakistan's following suit thereafter.

Pakistan's atom bomb is seen by the people of that country as their defence against the far superior military might of India. It balanced the power of the two hostile countries.

In this connection, the contribution of Pakistan's nuclear scientist Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan cannot be over emphasised. He not only gave Pakistan the defence mechanism that it needed but also made his country one of the members of the elite nuclear club.

India did not like Pakistan's making an atom bomb. The US also did not like it, because the US did not want to see the proliferation of nuclear weapons a phenomenon that is interpreted by Washington in its own way.

In 1981, on the orders and full logistic support from the US, Israel, the US sycophant in the Middle East, bombed and destroyed an Iraqi nuclear reactor. This year the US has invaded and occupied Iraq killing and maiming hundreds of people, telling lies that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. The US has compelled Libya to abandon its nuclear programme. It is also putting pressure on Iran to follow in the footsteps of Libya. So why should the US spare Pakistan?

At the instigation of the US, the government of General Musharraf has insulted and humiliated their national hero Abdul Qadeer Khan for making atom bomb. The US is dictating Pakistan to do away with its nuclear programme for good.

How ungrateful Pakistan is to nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan! He saved his country from external aggression by making the atom bomb and put Pakistan on equal footing with the US, the UK, China, France, Russia and India as a nuclear power.

OH Kabir, Dhaka



National anthem and cell phones

Cell phone has become a part and parcel of our day to day life and the number of users is around two million in the country. These subscribers use different types of ringer tones in their cell phones inclusive of popular Hindi music and many other tunes. Surprisingly, our national anthem is one of those ringer tones. Every now and then we hear this ringer tone around us in a crowded bus, in a market place, in playgrounds, in cinema halls and most embarrassingly even in the toilets!

I find this a snub to our national anthem and also know that those people are doing this out of complete ignorance. Even our national flag is not excluded from this sort of anywhere and everywhere usage. As an independent nation we are proud of our national anthem as well as the national flag. So we should think twice before using our national anthem as a mobile ringer tone.

Md Nazrul Islam Sumon

Dept Of English, DU

Engineering education

In reply to a question asked by a BR (Bangladesh Railway) employee, while going to Rajshahi from Tangail, my home district, I said that Bangladesh is an LDC with so many problems -- so it's not at all possible for us to send an astronaut to the space. Another question was whether any person of Bangladeshi origin in the field of engineering has invented any basic instrument/device/scientific law. I replied not quite negatively but attempted to convince him that Sir Jagadish