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Politics-free campus?

While supporting a ban on active politics on the campus in his well written article appearing in the Point-Counterpoint of your April 6 issue, Mridul Chowdhury warns against a complete and unqualified ban on all forms of politics. He argues that as 'the most important conscience of the society' and without any specific agenda of their own, the students are best suited to wage a movement to overcome overriding national issues. There are two ways to look at it.

Yes, in case of a crisis or issue of a historic or a catastrophic nature a war, a tyrannical regime or a natural calamity any issue that is affecting the entire nation, the students can wage a movement aimed at ridding the nation of the crisis, or resisting a persistently undesirable state of affairs.

No, because the very 'cause' or 'national issue' justifying students' involvement can be defined in a motivated way to draw the students into a movement that may serve the interest of the leaders (mostly politicians), and be detrimental to the interest of the student community and the nation at large.

So we have to be extremely careful in sanctioning any liberty to the student community to taking part in political activities in the traditional sense: forming rival groups for and against 'the cause', taking out processions and going on strikes boycotting classes.

We must have no ambiguity that in sheer economic terms, students are intellectual commodities, having market both at home and abroad. Over the past decades, their involvement in politics has adversely affected their quality and thus market value - both at home and abroad. It is tragic indeed that 36 years after liberation, we are getting 'intellectual resources' from abroad to fill many mid to senior level positions in educational institutions, business houses and industry at the expense of home-grown talents.

In today's global society opinions win wars, and bring aid and support. Therefore in the face of any genuine cause or ideological issue an assault on a beloved professor, a speeding bus running over a classmate or anything that the student community find terrible and unbearable, they will do better by taking to internet, and mobilizing opinions, locally and globally. This will be a more effective and far more

desirable means of 'protest' or 'struggle' than agitating on the campus or going violent on the streets at the expense of education. Therefore the UGC must consider banning all such activities that would constrain or impede the student community from acquiring knowledge and thus handicap them in the global talent market, to the great detriment of national interest.

To put in a word aiding, abetting, patronizing, and condoning hooliganism, and condoning hooliganism, and condoning hooliganism of academic environment and class/ exam schedule must be banned regardless of cause. We can take lesson from the overseas world and turn our campuses into heavens of learning. Only then can we regain the glory of our academic brilliance of the past era when a degree from any of universities of the then East Bengal (now Bangladesh) carried great weight in the whole of British Empire that stretched across the continents.

Md. Yunus  
Director Technical  
Paritex Group

Biofuel in Bangladesh

An editorial in a local paper of March 31 should create the needed awareness on biofuels; which I believe is needed in Bangladesh. The editorial was based on opinions published by various people who have studied the subject; relevant to their particular environment. It need not correspond to Bangladesh's particular position on the matter. I have been closely following the developments over the internet (a great teacher) for the past few years. My observations are given below.

Calling the production technology "Knowledge intensive" was overstating the facts. To me; an engineer by profession (retired now); the technology, based upon catalyst reforming followed by fractional distillation is a known basis for producing various chemicals. It is practised in many processes since the last quarter of a century. A technical institute in South India has done considerable pilot plant studies, and patented an established local based process. Success of the process is established by the fact that a number of biofuel refineries have been set up in India.

The very positive side of the editorial; which needs emphasis, was the statement "This does not mean we should stop developing



This is not the first time that we have been so erratic. We have been displaying such performances for years. Our children grow up playing cricket in the streets, at home, at school; and we are defeated by teams like Ireland, who have just started cricket. What is wrong with our team's coach? What are the steps that are taken in order to select a team to play in the World Cup? I hope the players are not selected on who is related to whom, but on how well they play. In my opinion it is the players' responsibility to learn from previous matches as to how to perform better. In this World Cup, we had our hopes high, thinking our team was becoming professional. But

biofuels as much biofuel (meaning plants that can give biofuels) can be grown on lands too marginal to support food crops." sugarcane and casava the two biofuel plants as process raw material need to be developed in Bangladesh. Sugar mills are asking for subsidy, as they are not cost effective against import prices. Why not switch over a sugar mill in Northern Bangladesh and set up a biofuel plant there to give better value addition to sugarcane. It will also give ready market to sugarcane growers who are today unpaid; as sugar mills have no cash, and finished sugar stocks are piling up and deteriorating! Also casava can be grown in adjacent fallow lands; it will be a biofuel input as well as acceptable cattle fodder-a duel use!

Our government should mobilise and encourage entrepreneurs and provide all media and agriculture department support for this vital addition to our liquid fuel needs which is increasing day by day. The end product has an established market; and cash flow will not be a problem. Already we subsidise in foreign exchange the retail price of liquid fuel; so if needed an initial subsidy can be rationally considered for developing this strategic fuel based essential local industry. The technology and expertise is available next door in India!

Along with biofuel, the government should seriously import hybrid automobiles, even by reducing or eliminating duty. The subsidy in favour of the hybrid car will be more than offset by the reduced imported requirement of petro over a normal ten year life of a new car. I believe there is cost benefit advantage for this policy decision; considering that a hybrid car will need at most fifty percent of the petrol consumed by a traditional car over its life cycle! Why not on an experimental basis import say ten cars, and carry out an economic cost benefit projection after driving it regularly in Dhaka say for five years. It will not cost the earth, and can be considered as a research project; but it may provide invaluable insight to our liquid fuel requirements that can be reduced. I sincerely and seriously believe this important project needs to be taken up in national interest; and the time to do it is today!

S.A.Mansoor  
Gulshan, Dhaka

Car parking

The city needs multi-storied designated parking lots for busy commercial areas such as Motijheel, Gulshan-1 and 2, Dhanmondi etc. These facilities can charge the car owners on an hourly parking rate. The cars will be kept safe and there will be no parked cars on the road. The city dwellers need to give up the luxury of dropping right in front of their destinations.

I am sure this will help ease traffic congestion and bring some sort of order on the roads.  
Shehzaad Shams  
DOHS, Baridhara

Saarc tourism

We are very much delighted to see that a strong consensus is building up among the people in the Saarc region regarding free trade and travel among the countries. We appreciate the innovative idea of Saarc Car Rally and demand of lifting visa for Saarc citizens. At this point, I would like to draw the attention of the Indian government to the discriminatory entry fee at tourism spots, which belong to our common heritage. For example, we have to pay US\$ 15 at Taj Mahal



they proved themselves amateurs; as a team that had no spirit. The reason I say this is, the players (for example: Bashar, and Nafees) made empty promises of doing well, but in reality they could not live up to their promises. We should not talk too much, as action

speaks volumes. What kind of captaincy is it if your fellow team members cannot follow you? Bashar cannot run, he cannot hit 4's, he wastes most of the balls thinking whether to run or not, and in the process some other team member gets run out.

come to haunt both the Begums.  
Nutan Thakur  
Lucknow, India

Beauty of "sampan"

As you stand atop the road bridge over the Kamaphuli and gaze at the horizon, you can see a number of vessels: small ships, trawlers, barges and sampans. Though small in size, a sampan is a part of the river, nay a tradition-a legacy that probably goes back to the days of ancient Bengal.

The sampan ,with its horn-like stern and crest-like prow, floats on the river with a grace that is reminiscent of a swan. Its hull is made of seasoned wood, coated with tar. In fact, the boat seems to be a study in poise, balance and harmony--qualities that have made it so suitable for the river. The boat bobs up and down on the waves: a very familiar sight. There are some folk songs that deal with the boat or the boatman, highlighting its beauty.

With the passage of time, the traditional architecture of boats has changed. These days most of the boats are engine-powered, and hence the design of the boat is adjusted to that purpose.

ZabedWali  
Pahartali, Chittagong

Kashmir issue

The way Pakistan behaved at the Saarc summit held at Delhi in the first week of this April and the way Pakistan deals with the Kashmir problem give rise to some questions.

- (1)- On the eve of Saarc summit it was reported by the Indian print & electronic media that the Indian foreign minister reacted adversely to Pakistan's demand that Kashmir issue be discussed in Saarc, before anything. But Pakistan never raised the Kashmir issue forcefully during this Saarc summit.
- (2)- On the contrary, the Indian foreign minister was reported in media as saying that Pakistan did not discuss the Kashmir problem or the 4-point formula of President Musharraf (which deals with demilitarization, joint control, unhindered visit of Kashmiris across border etc.), either with India or at the Saarc forum.
- (3)- It is a matter of common sense & practice that in every dispute the contending parties are required to put forward their versions of solution and then a medium/least controversial path is arrived at as a final solution
- (4)- So far only Pakistan has been coming forward, time and again, with various solutions/formulas for solution of Kashmir problem, but India has never put forward any solution/formula.
- (5)- But amazingly Pakistan neither ever asked India nor appealed (despite the plebiscite resolution of the UN) to the international community/forums to constrain India to at least come forward with its version of any formula for solution of the Kashmir problem.

Hem Raj Jain  
New Delhi, India

Amazing cricket crowd!

While watching the ongoing World Cup cricket on TV screen, one cannot afford to miss the exuberance of festivity that the crowd is overwhelmed with in the stadiums! The whole stadium (all the stadiums), as it appears, sway around with layers of sparkling colours! It is a canvas of a rendezvous of sparkling colours all around!

Amazing is the fact that people

Nayan  
On e-mail

A note to EC

As in many other countries, no one should be allowed to hold the post of prime minister for more than two terms.

This will give the opportunity to develop new leaders as well as discourage the current practice of clinging to power by any means.  
Mohammad Enamul Huque  
Michigan, USA

Tigers' limitations

There is no doubt that our cricketers are improving day by day and already they have reached a position of honor in world cricket but what seems awkward is their weakness on fast and bouncy wickets. Also, it is felt that Bangladeshi batsmen are not that comfortable against the short pitched delivery which comes to almost shoulder height.

Obviously, the natural condition of our country is the most important cause behind this problem but we believe it can be overcome through proper planning like making bouncy pitches for home-league matches and practising more against short pitched balls.

Cricket is a matter of pride for us which is keeping the spirit of our country high. So we are looking forward to a steady performance of the team.

Shoaib Mohammad Siddiqui  
Institute of Business  
Administration  
IBA

Our performance against Ireland

There is no doubt that this year's cricket World Cup will be a memorable one not only for our cricket team but also for the millions of die-hard cricket fans in Bangladesh. Our cricketers played superbly against India and South Africa. Unfortunately, it was really disappointing the way they played against Ireland. Bangladesh could have easily won the match if our batsmen played a little better. None of the batsmen seemed to have the patience to stay at the crease, rather they played some careless shots. We really do not understand why Shahriar Nafees got another chance to open the innings. The selectors know for sure that he is not in good form, so they should have continued with the team that won against South Africa.

Minhaj Ahmed  
Uttara, Dhaka

Confusion persists

The interim government must not make political parties its enemies, which would definitely lead to chaos.

Is there none among politicians or the civil society to oppose openly

whatever is going on in connection with Khaleda's going abroad or Hasina being not allowed to return home? They must remain in the country.

Let's not break the trust of the people.  
A. Sarwar  
On e-mail

New Bangladesh, new hope

I would like to thank the ACC (Anti Corruption Commission) for its relentless effort so far to make a better Bangladesh than anytime before. I appreciate the way it works now against the corrupt politicians of our country. The politicians used to think that they were beyond the law of the country. They used to feel that they were in such a position that was unreachable. As a result, whoever came to power exploited the country through all possible means. They used to pledge to serve the country and give it a prosperous shape before coming to power, and forget everything after taking oath. But the time has come when we all have to work together to give our country a good shape and good image before the rest of the world. This is high time to think differently. It is time to have the realisation that our beloved country cannot be exploited by the so-called patriotic leaders. I would like to thank the present caretaker government for raising a hope among the people about their future.

I hope that this momentum of work of the present caretaker government will continue.  
Shahadat Hossain Tanvir  
St. Nicholas, Stevenage, UK

Caretaker government and cricket

Bangladesh won three matches in the World Cup. Credit for that definitely goes to the players. But I think the caretaker government also deserves some credit. The caretaker government has a non-BNP, non-Awami stand and appears to be neutral (at least for the time being!). After takeover, the government made the cricket management free from all non-cricket personnel. This action was the first victory that we achieved. With that change the present cricket team, with a high morale, became more dedicated, committed, tension-free and it resulted in the wins in the World Cup. I therefore think that we must give some credit to the caretaker government with regard to the victories. Nepotism and mismanagement in the sports field brought disgrace to our nation in the past.

I would request you to write more about it in your daily!  
A. H. Nowsher Uddin  
Project Coordinator  
GFATM

Voter list



In my opinion, asking for 18 months to make a voter list, as announced by the Election Commission (EC), is well justified. People who think that this time frame is way too long should understand the fact that it is a process that can't end overnight. The process requires planning, assessment, budget, tender, hiring knowledgeable workers, purchasing right equipment, building network, training and implementation.

The EC needs to hire lots of skilled people to get the job done right. If an EC worker spends minimum of 15 minutes with each voter to verify his/her eligibility to vote, enter data, take picture and collect finger prints, the worker can take care of 32 eligible votes a day, assuming he or she has to work standard 8 hours a day. That means the EC will need 6250 skilled IT workers to process 200,000 applications a day! The productivity may vary depending on

how knowledgeable and skilled an EC worker is.

Let's say, Bangladesh has 80 million eligible voters out of its 150 million population. Now, if the EC is able to register and issue 200,000 voter ID cards a day, it'll take 400 days to finish the job, which does not include any unexpected downtime, weekends and holidays. By the same token, the EC needs time to test the voting system to make sure it's flawless, which also requires time. There are other known and unknown factors involved that may further delay the estimated time frame. So we need to give the EC the time they asked for and cooperate with them.

Remember, this time we cannot afford to abandon the project. And if we do, it'll waste millions of taka.

Shimul  
Boca Raton, Florida



Ignoring Iraqi refugees

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) says there has been an "abject denial" around the world of the humanitarian impact of invading Iraq. The UN faces an enormous task in helping countries such as Jordan and Syria to cope with the huge influx of Iraqi refugees. The international community had to step in to help address their food, health and education needs. Syria says it is home to 1.2 million Iraqi refugees, with up to 800,000 in Jordan. Damascus has repeatedly called for help to deal with the problem. There has been an abject denial of the impact, the humanitarian impact, of the war, the huge displacement within Iraq of up to 1.9 million people who are homeless because of the war, and those people never got back to the homes after Saddam Hussein was overthrown. Almost two million more people are displaced inside Iraq - people who have fled their homes to escape the violence. Jordan has an interest in stopping Iraq from disintegration, for fear that the already high number of refugees going to Jordan will increase substantially. That number, too, is steadily growing, the UN says, with some provinces feeling overwhelmed and attempting to close their boundaries to refugees from other areas. Many Sunni Arab and Shia people have been forced to flee from mixed areas to districts where their respective communities are in the majority.

The crisis must be handled efficiently by the UN with support from the international community.

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