



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Campus politics



Like everyday I was looking at The Daily Star website from my home when one of the headlines caught my attention. A seminar was held in Dhaka where some academics got together and expressed their views whether politics should still be allowed in the public universities.

Personally, I am always against political involvement of the teachers and students in the public universities. Previously, when I was studying at Dhaka University, I always argued with fellow students on this issue and on many occasions students did favour student politics in the universities, though they themselves were not involved because it would harm their study and exam results. They always asked me to look back at the historical journey of student politics in Bangladesh starting from the Language Movement.

So, I was not surprised to see a couple of speakers in that seminar

still expressing their 'different views'.

My first question is, did the role of DU students in 1952 have anything to do with national politics? I would say, the term student politics was coined only after the liberation war when a couple of political parties formed their students' wings.

My second question is, have the universities or the general students or the academically dedicated teachers gained anything from teacher or student politics? Yes, some teachers have gained promotions and also positions like the VC, Pro-VC, positions in the Senate and Syndicate, teachers' association, hall provosts etc only to help themselves, not to help the students or the universities. And the students, I mean, the few student leaders, have always gained some good pocket money from the parties to live on and spend on drugs, alcohol etc and of course

training on how to use arms and muscle. Yes, a very few of them ended up being parliament members!

My third question is, what have these students lost doing politics in the universities? The list won't end here. One of my uncles, who stood 1st in his first and second year honours final at the Jahangirnagar University years back, got third class in his university final year exam and had to retake the exam only to get a second class as he became a popular student leader of one of the two major political parties!!

Now it is appropriate time for the lawmakers to look at this issue and take necessary steps so that the universities don't get bogged down by student politics.

Tariq Sadat Hai
Postgraduate Student, RMIT University
Melbourne, Australia

Ban on indoor politics

As before, I come to you on another very important and sensitive subject. The existing ban on indoor politics should be lifted without further delay because:

In our wildest dream we do not want to see obliteration or weakening of our traditional political forces, who are in favour of democracy and freedom. God forbid, because of this strict ban, if these forces are obliterated, then extreme forces of the right and left will fill the vacuum!! Saddam Hussain destroyed the traditional political forces with his Baath party, and when he and his party were destroyed by foreign intervention, today opposing extremist forces are dominating the country and the bloodbath continues. Now attempts to bring back peace through democracy is failing in that country. The ramshackle government there is offering to talk to those extremist factions. World History is testimony to many such courses in the life of nations. Germany and Italy in WW2 years, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Palestine, and many other countries are the examples of such fate in the present day world.

The reason is simple everywhere, "suppression of constitutional democratic process"

We never want to see such a scenario in our country when authorities "will be talking" to JMB and PBC!!

You have been rendering service to the nation with your editorials and commentaries, please concentrate on this issue. Struggle against corruption and social disorder is a continuous process that has to continue at all costs at all times!!

The responsibility is on the press to make the powers those be see light and to make them understand the short and long term probable consequences.

I am a Physician of Bangladeshi origin, I had the opportunity to participate in various struggles and the war of liberation in my time as a medical student in Dhaka in those turbulent days.

Though, I have spent much of my working life abroad, yet welfare of my motherland is a matter of great importance to me.

Dr.M. Hussain
One-mail

Dr. Yunus' decision



We feel ashamed to see the political leaders being unable to accept one newcomer in politics. And we, the people, can't accept a man who wants to enter the arena of politics with a mission.

Nobel Laureate Dr. Yunus is no longer coming forward with his vision to lead the country towards its goal. And it is the politicians from other parties who have always been critical of his coming to politics.

But why?

Emran Chowdhury
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Nobel winner and Grameen Bank founder Dr. Yunus has declared that he would discontinue his plan of forming a political party. It is a very good decision for him as well as his identity, because it is possible for him to help the country develop without becoming a politician.

He can help the country in several ways. Thank you, Dr. Yunus for your decision.

S.M. Imranul Islam Rajon
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Crossfire and some questions

In the last few years we have got lots of criminals killed in 'crossfire' by Rab, police etc. Who are they? Say Mominullah David, Pichchi Hannan and so on! What have they done? How much money (black) they had? They had patrons Their patrons are now in jail.

Many "patron" godfathers are now rusting in different jails. These people are no doubt the worst criminals.

M Sharful Alam
Reid govt. officer

Sangshad Bhaban area

This is to bring to your notice that on May Day we went to Sangsad Bhaban area with our small kid. But we could not enter the open field due to security reasons. Lots of people were present there as there are very few empty spaces in Dhaka city.

We do not find any reason behind blocking people from entering the free space, especially when there is no programme in Sangsad Bhaban.

Shahen Iqbal
Banker

Stop smoking

Smoking is really injurious to health! Smokers are at grave risk! Smoking causes a range of diseases, even the ones never before suspected including stomach cancer. In fact, smoking affects virtually every organ of the body. It has been known since decades that smoking is bad for health, but the current report shows that it's even worse. Smoking kills people in different ways in different countries. Smoking doesn't just affect the smoker. It has ill-effects on the health of the people around him or her. Quitting this bad habit will reduce the risk of disease and improve health. So, it is very important to give up this bad habit.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) launched the campaign for "World No Tobacco Day" (May 31) with the slogan: Tobacco and Poverty. The slogan explains the link that exists between tobacco and poverty, and how the use of tobacco, especially by poor people who consume this product the most, can have harmful consequences. WHO notes that the tobacco epidemic is still expanding, especially in developing countries. Tobacco is the fourth most common risk factor for disease worldwide.

The law in Bangladesh forbids public smoking which has not been followed properly by the unscrupulous smokers since the enactments of the law. They smoke even in the bus which causes great trouble for the non-smokers. Sometimes serious patients travel in the bus and they feel sick due to the smell of cigarettes.

Anyone caught smoking in public places is liable to be fined Tk. 50 as per the law, which, I think, is not enough. It is needed that the government gets much tougher on the smokers as well as the tobacco industry.

Mohammad Shaiful Islam
Lecturer, Department of English Metropolitan University, Sylhet

Medical practitioners' fees

I have read with interest the recent remarks of the Hon. Adviser for

Health. He has on more than one occasion mentioned his intention to fix the doctor's consultation fees as well as the operation & diagnostic charges.

Why should the doctors' community be the subject of discussion all the time? The doctors' community remains so busy with their profession that many don't even know the financial support provided by them. The poor patients /relatives and dear & near ones are almost always provided free treatment. Can you mention one profession where services are provided free? Despite having the highest academic qualifications, there are many doctors who go hand to mouth. Our tendency is to consult the senior most physicians even for trivial matters. In every profession, there ought to be differences in the amount charged. Ordinary people do not have access to top lawyers or architects/engineers/professors.

Why should not the fees of architects/chartered accountants/college teachers/lawyers be fixed? Is it that the education expenses of only medical graduates are borne by the tax payers? Justice warrants equal treatment for all.

It would be highly appreciated if the Health Adviser takes the initiative against physicians involved in unbridled corruption and nepotism during the last few years. It would be appreciated if committees are formed to review 'abnormal' promotions' in the health sector.

Shamin Ahmed
One-mail

Traffic congestion in Gulshan

Those who reside or work around the northern side of Banani or Gulshan experience acute traffic congestion at different times of the day at Kamal Ataturk Avenue and Road # 11 & 12 of Banani.

This can be eased out if the relevant authorities construct a road over the lake joining Banani & Gulshan from Road # 11 of Banani.

The road with pipe culverts which will not cost much can be constructed to join with Road # 41 and Road # 34 of Gulshan.

Joining Road # 34 diagonally will be slightly longer but will surely help the movement of the traffic.

I am sure with few pipe culverts the water flow of the lake will not be



obstructed.

This link road will divert major portion of the Gulshan traffic from Banan side.

It is my sincere request to the relevant authorities that they consider this suggestion seriously to help mitigate the sufferings of many motorists and it will also save valuable foreign exchange by reducing burning of fuel.

Nurul Islam
Gulshan, Dhaka

Overseas voice communication

The use of VoIP for overseas voice call has been a much talked about subject in Bangladesh. Voice calls through VoIP/Internet Telephony resulting in a growing grey market is a major concern for both the government and the licensed operators/service providers.

In the recent past, several illegal VoIP operations have been detected by the govt. and actions are being taken against those illegal operations. Such action has restricted their operation and as a result access to and from Bangladesh to foreign countries has been reduced considerably, though the state-owned Bangladesh T & T Board (which is the only licensed operator for overseas voice communication) is trying to augment their capabilities to cope with the demand.

Butter choice?

A few days ago my friends and I were wandering in the town. While walking, a shop attracted me which was decorated with some colourful cigarette ads. Some words drew my attention. At the bottom it was written, 'Dhuppan mirittu ghotay' (smoking causes death) but at the top the words 'better choice for a brighter future' could be seen in bold letters.

The thing which causes death cannot be a better choice!

The authorities concerned should look into the matter.

Nayanabhiram Das
Borokatra, Chankharpul Dhaka

1. De-regulate PC to PC Internet Telephony immediately.

(a) It's not possible to monitor and control.

(b) It cannot have impact in ILD (International Long Distance) Traffic because of very few Internet users.

2. Permit PC to phone telephony for outward international calls to the existing ISPs.

- it provides a cheap option for ILD calls yet without impacting BTBTB.

- it is difficult to separate it from data calls.

- Most of the grey ILD calls land on mobiles and fixed phones through interconnecting lines between ISP node and fixed/mobile operators' switch. As such, barring outward dialing from ISP node to telecom operators' switch will restrict such calls.

3. BTBTB should expand its managed VoIP options for all destinations.

4. Increase interconnection between BTBTB and mobile service operators (More than 2 crore subscribers) to enable termination of incoming calls from abroad.

5. Introduce competition through private sector participation in ILD market by issuing license for:

a) Setting up circuit switched ILD gateways as well as

b) Setting up ILD gateway with VoIP as a technology option.

BTRC is yet to publish regulations for QOS for Internet as well as VoIP based ILD service and should immediately consider issuing broad QOS regulation stipulating some minimum benchmarks to be achieved for the sake of safeguarding the interest of the consumers.

N.H. Choudhury
Ex Member, BTRC
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

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N.H. Choudhury
Ex Member, BTRC
Dhanmandi, Dhaka

It's praiseworthy that Dhaka City Corporation is naming roads after freedom fighters and sector commanders. But why re-name the existing roads which are in use or known for ages resulting practically in no use of new names? Take, for example, Gulshan Avenue (which is in use for 30/35 years) from No.2 market to south which has been re-named after a freedom fighter, but I am yet to hear or see from anybody the new name. North of Gulshan-2 traffic point up to Pakistan High Commission presumably is still Gulshan Avenue which was systematically (holding) numbered; starting from the south end with odd number like 1 Gulshan Avenue on the west side and even number 2 Gulshan Avenue on the east side ending serially on the north side near Pakistan HC. So, if a part of Gulshan Avenue is renamed the serial holding numbers become inconsistent. To add more confusion, many newly constructed buildings do not show these holding numbers. Similarly, recently some numbered roads of Dhanmandi area have been named which will cause confusion.

May I suggest that instead of re-naming the existing roads why not name the roads that do not have proper names e.g. so called Gulshan-Tejgaon link Road, Gulshan-1 to Badda link road (most roads are link roads, anyway), Gulshan-2 to Baridhara main road and many other roads in the city.

Kamal Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka

Rehab sales

I have seen a number of articles where people complain that real estate developers are not providing housing for the poor. There are a number of developers providing housing for low-income groups, you can buy a decent apartment for about 20-30 lakhs in Dhaka, visit the next Rehab fair and you will see for yourself. If this is the case, the complainers are talking about the very poor, the homeless and unemployed. In which democratic country do private real estate developers make housing for free? None. It is not the job of a private business to provide housing for the very poor, it is the job of the government, that is why they collect taxes for social welfare. Businesses are in operation for profit, not for charity, that is the very underlying principle of capitalist economics, and that is why they are called businesses and not charities.

There are other allegations like real estate companies only selling luxury apartments to corrupt officials and that is why their sales are down. I have spoken to a friend in this sector and his reply was very interesting. A certain proportion of their customers are corrupt officials, but the vast majority of their customers are not. Real estate developers don't want to sell to government officials because they (government officials) don't want to pay, they are used to getting things for free, or they want to buy at cost price so the developer makes no money. They also often are too arrogant to pay ground rent and make very bad tenants, creating too many problems for real estate companies. If you ask a developer, they are reluctant to sell to government people; ultimately they

are blackmailed into it as the politicians threaten to make their lives difficult. They avoid selling to government people at all costs, but sometimes they are cornered and have no choice. Most of the Rehab customers are shop owners, garments people, Bangladeshis living abroad, business people. The reason why sales have gone down is because these sectors are holding on to their money and fear the taxmen, they don't want the government delving into their affairs too much and creating problems for them, physical assets such as apartments are very easy to find and cannot be hidden. If this sector suffers, thousands of people (bricklayers, painters, steel workers etc.) will be unemployed and it will affect the GDP and the economy.

The point of the recent press conference was to highlight that the government is scaring the general public away from making purchases in real estate and other sectors and it may cost them in terms of employment. Why would the politicians live in an apartment anyway, when so many have grabbed land and had benefited from illegal plot allocations?

Shabbir Choudhury
UK

Opinion

We are impressed by the opinions expressed by Durreen Shahnaz in the Point-Counterpoint page. We wish our political leaders read the points put forward by Shahnaz and do their best in the interest of the people & the country. Unfortunately, the majority of our politicians do not read such presentations published in the newspapers.

I wish at least this write up could be sent to the political party offices for the attention of the party chief.

Fareed Islam
Toronto, Canada

A letter to chief adviser

Congratulations for your tremendous effort in the fight against corruption. Hope you will continue your fight until it is finished. It is your responsibility and a chance that must be taken.

I know you are facing many challenges, but challenges are not unexpected. Challenges are always good.

Dr Khandker Ahmedul Haque
Trinidad & Tobago

GrameenPhone vehicles

Our attention was drawn to a letter in which a reader from Gulshan wrote about the inconvenience caused by GrameenPhone employee transport buses parked on the streets of the residential area.

We understand that a very legitimate concern has been expressed in the letter. We also received similar complaints previously. The reader will be happy to know that the buses concerned, used to transport our employees to and from work, have all been moved from the Gulshan streets to a special parking facility in Bashundhara, on land specifically acquired for this purpose.

In fact, the buses in question are being parked at Bashundhara since February 2007 and so will not cause any inconvenience to the residents of the Gulshan area.

Sayed Talat Kamal
Deputy General Manager Information GrameenPhone

The subcontinent

India's claim for credit for the creation of Bangladesh can neither be questioned, nor doubted. Although the division of Pakistan into two parts was unbearable for Pakistani leadership initially, Islamabad did come to live with the reality of Bangladesh existing as a sovereign nation. The fact that as a smaller country it could concentrate on its economic and other issues better was realised in due course in Pakistan and Islamabad began to worry less about loss of East Pakistan and focused on its developmental activities. India over the years has made Bangladesh an opponent as much as Pakistan is treated as an enemy.

Bangladesh became a sovereign state during the Congress regime in India. As India claims credit for the birth of Bangladesh now, it opens up a few issues regarding its responsibilities and its attitude to the concept of independence. As the chief architect of the creation of Bangladesh, India also has to shoulder the chief responsibility to assist it to become a strong nation as well by enhancing its economic and security environment. The world perhaps expected that India would even share its scientific facilities with Bangladesh.

Instead of helping Bangladesh, unfortunately, New Delhi behaves quite indifferently.

Dr. Abdul Ruff Colachal
JNU, New Delhi

Thank you, Dr. Yunus

Summer cricket

As cricket fans we warmly welcome the Indian cricket team. We wish them a pleasant tour, and an enjoyable stay in Bangladesh.

Summer cricket is far more taxing and a genuine endurance test for the cricketers, particularly if the players have to field a long innings. This is what worries me about the Bangladesh team, their physical

and mental fitness to withstand a long leather chase in this hot weather. Apart from technique and skill, a lot will depend on stamina; more so as the Indian team will definitely seek revenge for their World Cup defeat. After all, they have a point to prove!

Regarding Bashir, the captain, I have serious doubts, given his amateurish perfor-

mance in the World Cup. His selection seems more subjective rather than based on performance and ability. I am sure this is his last chance. Should he fail this time round, he should retire, for he has then no place in the team. Frankly speaking, the captain is on trial-- as a batsman and fielder as well as captain. Let he forget a lot depends on

him. One wonders if the task is within his capabilities today!

Nevertheless, best of luck to our home team. We hope and pray they will put up a good fight. A Test win? Who knows, after all cricket is a game of luck and chance!

S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka

