



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.



Woes of Bangladeshi workers abroad

When I had watched the news on sufferings of the Bangladeshi workers at KL airport, three questions came to my mind. Who should respond to this crisis? Why does this situation occur again and again? How to preclude this misery in future?

It was 23 July 2000, my colleague and I were in transit at KL airport on the way back from Johannesburg. I saw a group of Bangladeshis noticeably stressed and tired at the arrival lounge while I was waiting for my colleague who went to collect the hotel coupons and shuttle tickets. One from the group walked to me and asked if I am from Bangladesh and if I can give him a few ringgits as he was desperate to make a phone call to Bangladesh. I talked to him and came to know that they had been waiting for someone to pick them up since they had arrived at KL one day ago. Unfortunately, none showed up until then. They neither had money nor words beyond Bangla.

Undoubtedly, the same pathetic scene is recurring at the KL airport and at other airports in Singapore and the Middle East. It brings miseries for them and it is disgraceful for the whole nation. There is nothing wrong to admit that this is our problem, but who is to respond to this crisis? Why does it take days to solve this problem? It's hard to believe that none from KL immigration contacted Bangladesh embassy in Malaysia when hundreds of workers were stuck at the airport.

We should not forget the amount of remittance from manpower in foreign countries. The government should address this issue seriously and immediately to prevent such things happening in future. The Ministry of Labour and Manpower and the Department of Immigration jointly could arrange a two-day long pre-immigration workshop in a "Janashakti Raftani Camp" (manpower export camp) before their departure for the foreign countries. It could be similar to a Haji camp. The workshop could include legal ways of fund transfer, general practices of the destination countries, travel security, awareness about HIV and STD etc.

So far no government has done anything for the welfare of the workers while they are leaving the country or living abroad. Moreover, they are treated very badly in our foreign embassies-- something I observed several times. Sometimes they are cheated. The government must come up with appropriate and permanent measures for the welfare of the workers.

Faruk Ahmed
Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand

National ID and politics abroad

I am a Bangladeshi living in the USA for the last 9 years. I have some suggestions about the National ID.

1. Each national should be given a unique national ID number.
2. There must be a bar code corresponding to the unique number. Advantage of this bar code will be to check any forged national ID. A scanner with Internet connection will be enough to do the check. This will help police detect criminals. Also, banks can double-check the identity of a client with the national database which will reduce chances of fraud.
3. There must be a picture on one side of the card.
4. The front side should be written in Bengali. The other side will have basic information in English. So, it will be internationally acceptable.
5. It should be a plastic card. So, it will be durable. No paper will be used.
6. Now (if possible) or in future there should be an option for biometrics information like finger printing.
7. Now (if possible) or in future, there should be a security chip

inside the card. So that nobody can forge the national ID.

8. Bangladesh embassies should take the initiative to give the national ID to Bangladeshi living abroad.

I will also request the Bangladesh government to ban national politics outside Bangladeshi soil. Currently, Mexico does not permit its nationals to engage in any political activities outside Mexico.

Ishak Zaman
Michigan, USA

Khaleda Zia

At the time when everyone is talking about ending "Poribat tantra" in political parties and introducing more democratic practices within the parties in order to allow a strong honest and dedicated leadership to emerge, Begum Zia surprised everybody by appointing her brother as vice chairman of the BNP.

It seems to me that she wants to prove that she is the most powerful person in the BNP and doesn't care about the people's opinion. Furthermore, I am also quite surprised by the failure of the top BNP leadership to apprise

the intelligence of the Bangladeshi people when you claim you did not participate in the overwhelming corruption during your regime. How can anyone lead a gang of criminals without taking part or even knowing about them? How could you let this happen?

It is therefore pathetic to hear you proclaim that "your" people were enthusiastically waiting for your return. Who are these people?

The whole thing has to do with the process. A doctor's son does not become a doctor by the mere wish or machination of the parents. It involves a competitive educational process of acquiring the required skills, passing the rigorous academic exams and acquiring the certification of the medical board etc. The same is true for a lawyer or other professions a son does not become a lawyer simply because his mom consigned him there. However, such a similar rigorous process does not exist within the two major parties in Bangladesh and for the wards of politicians who want to be politicians. It is often the wish and machination of the parents that does it in Bangladesh, as there is no internal democracy in the parties. Unbeknownst to Sheikh Hasina, in liberal democracies, there is a voting process for selecting the party leadership at all levels. In the US, you don't get the Senate or house nomination simply because your dad or mom who happens to be a big enigma of the party wished so. You have to contest in primaries with all others aspiring for the party nomination and emerge from it. There is no parachuting, no descent from the heaven!

What seems to be lost on Hasina for that matter, Khaleda is the logic of within-party democracy, the vices of dynastic politics (as opposed to competitive politics) and the dire need for reform.

Panini Ahmed, Boston, USA

Sheikh Hasina's argument

In a dinner hosted by Sheikh Hasina in honour of journalists prior to her departure for Dhaka, she made the remark that there should not be any restrictions in Bangladesh for children of politicians becoming politicians as there are no similar restrictions on the children of doctors becoming doctors, those of lawyers becoming lawyers and those of journalists becoming journalists. This parallelism is apparently impeccable but actually downright misleading and grossly erroneous.

The whole thing has to do with the process. A doctor's son does not become a doctor by the mere wish or machination of the parents. It involves a competitive educational process of acquiring the required skills, passing the rigorous academic exams and acquiring the certification of the medical board etc. The same is true for a lawyer or other professions a son does not become a lawyer simply because his mom consigned him there. However, such a similar rigorous process does not exist within the two major parties in Bangladesh and for the wards of politicians who want to be politicians. It is often the wish and machination of the parents that does it in Bangladesh, as there is no internal democracy in the parties. Unbeknownst to Sheikh Hasina, in liberal democracies, there is a voting process for selecting the party leadership at all levels. In the US, you don't get the Senate or house nomination simply because your dad or mom who happens to be a big enigma of the party wished so. You have to contest in primaries with all others aspiring for the party nomination and emerge from it. There is no parachuting, no descent from the heaven!

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Panini Ahmed, Boston, USA

Begum Zia correctly of the present situation.

Mahbub
One-mail

27th BCS

Lately, there have been so many news reports in your newspaper, and also elsewhere, on the 27th BCS. I felt, as a candidate, that I should write to you expressing my views and thoughts on the issue. My question to the readers is what will happen to the candidates who really gave their heart and soul to achieve a position in the cadre service? There are so many candidates who had studied for two years and are still waiting to get appointments.

There are so many talented and honest candidates who knew nothing about the bribery and adoption of unscrupulous means in the BCS exams.

The caretaker government should probe the issue and find out the candidates who had resorted to corruption for getting a job. But the innocent and meritorious shouldn't be punished for no fault of theirs.

Tasmina Tarafder

Selected in the 27th B.C.S.

(Admin Cadre)

Rajshahi

My attention was drawn to the letter published on 16 May 2007 under the heading 27th BCS: Do justice by Mullah MA Sayed from Jessor. He said in his letter that the 27th BCS exams were held without any irregularity. Doesn't he know that there was question paper leakage in the preliminary and written tests? He himself admitted in his letter that some irregularities and anomalies have occurred at the PSC. So, how can he claim that the exams were held impartially?

Umme Kulsum

Women College Para

Jhenaidah

Replace the note

When we receive a Taka 2 note, it really disappoints us. It is torn and dirty. The Bangladesh Bank should immediately replace the worn-out notes in the market with coins, because a coin has a very long life. However, if the Bangladesh Bank has its own option of resolving the problem, it should try immediately.

Sadiq Rahim

Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Letter to Sheikh Hasina

As a foreigner living in Bangladesh for many years, I have helplessly observed this poor country falling deeper and deeper into the abyss. Since its independence Bangladesh has been rated as the most corrupt country in the world. At this very moment, the Anti-Corruption Commission is cracking down on corrupt ministers and government officials who have been plundering this poor country for almost two decades. The magnitude of the corruption and the cynicism of elected politicians and political leaders have shocked not only the Bangladeshi people but the world community as well. Greed seemed to have had no limits.

Your call for demonstrations and street violence was the last straw that broke the camel's back. The military saw no other way than to bring an end to this horrendous political menace, and whether we like it or not this decision has brought back pride and hope to the people of Bangladesh, which is easily observed when traveling around the country talking to people of all classes.

I think you underestimate the intelligence of the Bangladeshi people when you claim you did not participate in the overwhelming corruption during your regime. How can anyone lead a gang of criminals without taking part or even knowing about them? How could you let this happen?

It is therefore pathetic to hear you proclaim that "your" people were enthusiastically waiting for your return. Who are these people?

It seems to me that she wants to prove that she is the most powerful person in the BNP and doesn't care about the people's opinion. Furthermore, I am also quite surprised by the failure of the top BNP leadership to apprise

Not the people in general!

They are all hoping that the political deadlock that you and Khaleda Zia have created will soon come to an end.

A foreigner living in Bangladesh

One-mail

Ban on tobacco ads

The 23-April issue of The Daily Star carries a very stringent circular from the Health and Family Planning Ministry banning Tobacco ads in any manner/form, whatsoever.

But, in spite of touching upon many aspects and approaches to these promotions by the multinationals, a vital point seems to be missing, i.e. the age-limit of a person that can be accepted for selling Tobacco products to.

CNR

Chittagong

Sydney Fair

The report "Bangladeshi exporters get over \$1m orders in Sydney show" (UNB, Dhaka) was published in your daily on May 21 which said, "Bangladeshi stalls were visited by thousands of business people and general customers throughout the show". I think it's not true. The one Bangladeshi business hosted a few years back was much more lively.

Ekramullah Chowdhury

One-mail

University teachers

Recently, the CTG has issued an order to prevent university teachers from attending conferences, seminars, workshops abroad smoothly. As there was too much bureaucracy in getting permission to leave the country, the 1996 AL govt. took a historical decision to curb the sufferings of the university teachers. Before that teachers had to come to Dhaka to run after their files moving from one table to another. That was simply a wastage of time, energy, money and interest.

Once the teachers go abroad for conferences and seminars the country is represented in many ways. Scholars of other countries are able to know what academic developments are taking place in our country. Now for the mistakes of a few if the delegated power from the VCs is taken (or already taken?) away many will lose interest in attending international conferences. Bureaucracy will take away much valuable time from the teachers. They will have to come to Dhaka to pursue their matters. I think this does not ensure accountability, rather it might invite corruption. Already, there is a provision that if one goes abroad for more than three months under any award he will have to go through the Ministry of Education. Now if this rule is applied for short visits, things will become worse.

If accountability is the main concern here I would like to mention here how teachers have to be accountable to the authorities after every seminar/conference. We have to submit our research papers to the authorities for scrutiny for any kind of financial benefits. There is a committee which evaluates the participants, even you have to submit supporting documents to justify your participation.

So, for a few defaulters and cheats the promising university teachers should not suffer. This will bring another disaster for the scholars who pursue higher studies. The defaulters are few in number and they can easily be brought to justice. The authorities will have to look whether justice is mixed up with politics.

Again, I say the conference participants are the torchbearers of the country. These torches should not be put off by the ill-advice from certain high-ups.

Kamaluddin Ahmed

University of Chittagong

Movement of rickshaw

I am residing in a rented house at South Badda. Rickshaw is the only mode of transport for me to go to Gulshan and adjacent areas.

Though no circular was issued, but rickshaw movement is now

caught in the vicious net laid by the evildoers?

Finally, one must see to it that the deserving candidates are not made scapegoats.

We expect that the concerned authorities dispense justice, not favour by purging the 27th BCS of its corrupt elements, thus redeeming the prestige of the worthy candidates.

We heartily welcome reformation in the PSC, but hope it does not require the sacrifice of some virtuous job-getters.

Muhammad Abdul Hye Milton

Selected for BCS Foreign Affairs

Lecturer

Department of English

Jahangirnagar University

National ID and politics abroad

Although the students played a momentous role during the critical times--for example

during the Language Movement of 1952 and the Six-point Movement of the sixties--they failed to live up to the expectation of the countrymen in the post-1971 period.

Instead of giving voice to the conscience of the people, the politically inclined students started to toe the line of their respective parties.

This type of politics, pursued with a motive of greed and self-aggrandizement, often gave rise to chaotic situations on the campus that hampered the normal academic activities of the universities.

Armed clashes, harassment of general students, unscheduled closure of the seats of learning--all these became common phenom-

ena of our public universities. Needless to say, it is the general students that suffered because of the activities of a handful of so-called student leaders.

In this connection, we should also take into account the role-played by some teachers who did not feel any qualms to indulge in a type of politics marked by a degree of opportunism, devoid of an iota of decency and etiquette.

No wonder, the political activities of the students and the teachers resulted in a decline of the standard of education, and the general students got stuck in session-jams.

Finally, we appreciate the government move regarding the ban on student politics.

Zabed Walli, Pahartali, Chittagong



Comments on a commentary

I must admit I was rather intrigued by

a recent commentary (May 19th) written by you. It appears that you are chiding the EC to

expedite the processes involved so that the date of the elections can be moved up. You end up your piece

stating, "Please remember, election

is now the main focus of the nation. We want it soonest." I

simply cannot agree.

I am curious to know, if some magic wand could be waved to expedite the process, whether the election "should" be held in the next three months. That would certainly be "soonest." But what has "substantially" changed since January 12th that makes holding the elections such an imperative?

Surely no one wants to see the continuation of an era where many basic rights remain suspended. But given the choice between suspended rights and the possibility of ushering in the same corrupt bunch that has been around for more than three decades, I fail to understand: where is the hurry?

If the adage "Haste makes waste" is of any merit, should this nation not be assured first that a system is in place that would ensure free and fair elections for generations to come? What is six months or eighteen months, even in resource terms, if a rock-solid foundation