



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.

ICDDR,B Alumni Association

The ICDDR,B was established by an ordinance of the government of Bangladesh in 1978, which was subsequently ratified by Parliament. Its predecessor organisation, the Cholera Research Laboratory (CRL), was set up under an agreement with the government of Pakistan, when Bangladesh was part of that country.

Both the CRL and the ICDDR,B have contributed enormously towards addressing the public health problems in Bangladesh. Their contributions have global implications. This has been made possible with the untiring and selfless efforts of many Bangladeshis over the years of their work at the Centre, together with the work of a few dedicated Western colleagues. However, the Centre unfortunately has also been responsible for some of its work, particularly related to vaccine trials, which have proved quite detrimental to the interests of Bangladeshis.

Those who had provided their valuable time and efforts in the activities of the Centre over the years since 1960 formed the ICDDR,B Alumni Association in 2002 upon their retirement from the ICDDR,B. The overriding objective of the Alumni Association is to enable the former staff of the Centre to continue to advance the mission and vision of the Centre on a purely voluntary and honorary basis as the bridge between the existing and the former staff, and serve as the ambassadors of the Centre, both within the country and outside.

After the formation of the Alumni Association in 2002 with around 400 former staff of the Centre, an Executive Committee was elected and a constitution was framed. The Alumni Association continued its activities, as per the constitution. However, suddenly on December 8, 2006 at the last general meeting of the Alumni Association, when the office-bearers of the new Executive

Committee were proposed, Dr David Sack, the immediate past Executive Director, quite arbitrarily and without any lawful authority, opposed the election of the new Executive Committee, and announced dissolution of the Association. This came as a big shock to over 250 alumnus who left the Centre totally frustrated and dejected. In this way, Dr. David Sack is denying the alumnus their right and privilege clearly in violation of the Association's constitution.

Through your daily, I would like to draw the attention of the relevant authorities of the government of Bangladesh as well as the Board of Trustees and the senior management and staff of ICDDR,B to set the Centre in order and once again allow the Alumni Association to carry on with its activities unhindered, as per the constitution.

President
ICDDR,B Alumni Association
Dhaka

making in crucial areas.

This body should have the power to look into the ministries' plans and progress.
Arafat Islam Tona, Dallas, US

Proposed UGC recruitment rules

This refers to the news item on the uniform rules to be formulated by the UGC for recruitment and promotion of teachers and employees in the public universities (DS, 23 June 2007). This should have been done much earlier in the interest of higher education. Some kind of guidelines (if not rules) were already devised earlier by the UGC but they were modified/changed to accommodate the group interests of individual universities to suit their purpose. Therefore, particularly during the last five years or so, many unqualified teachers were recruited and undeserving candidates got promotion.

The on-going enquiries by the committees formed by the UGC reveal some of the bizarre facts about recruitment and promotion of teachers in the public universities. It has been almost an open secret that political affiliation of candidates was collected beforehand and accordingly a selection meeting was staged. Soon after the 4-party alliance government came to power, the existing selection committees were reconstituted drastically so that the above activities could be made easy. There were instances in which the candidates had better academic records including publications and international exposure than some of the members in the selection committees! Disgusted and frustrated, a good number of senior teachers from public universities chose to join private universities.

It is high time to bring in modification to Article 70. Members should be allowed to express their views in a more liberal way.

Members should be given the freedom to choose right/wrong and go against their party's decision, if necessary.

The parties should not call hartal.

They should transfer themselves from the streets to the parliament.

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Student politics

It is highly regrettable that students in Bangladesh do not get the opportunity to train themselves to assume leadership positions in public and business affairs. Less than 5% students force majority of the students to stay away from their regular activities on campus in many public universities. It should be made an offence for any student or organisation to

force other students to abstain from their classes.

University authorities and the Bangladesh government should guarantee the security of all students. One or more leadership institutes should be established to train future leaders of the country.

Mohammed Shahidullah
USA

Pertinent issues

System without efficient leaders is powerless; leaders without an efficient system are tyrannical.

Therefore, we need reforms in the political system, government institutions and fill up the vacuum in the constitution.

We need to change the style of politics that was going on for the past two decades. By now, we have seen how menacing the political atmosphere could be. Politics was in the hands of two or three persons. Absolute power made them greedy and they had no accountability.

The political parties should come to the consensus that national issues should be dealt with collectively and all parties should engage themselves in dialogues on economic and foreign policies.

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They should transfer themselves from the streets to the parliament.

All political parties should organise their councils every 3 years and candidates seeking election to party's top posts should be elected through secret ballot.

Debates(in front of electronic media

and party council) should be held amongst top contestants.

No person should stay as party chief for more than two terms. No person should continue as party president after becoming prime minister.

Funds and expenditures of all political parties should be made

public.

We witnessed failures in our country's parliament over the past few years. Parliament should carry the essence of a democratic nation. But our parliament lacks effectiveness.

A bicameral parliament is needed for bringing proper 'checks/balances' into the house. The lower house will ensure public perception of any bill and, the upper house should ensure effective and constructive policy making.

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