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Birdem

The recent doctors' strike (June 25-28) at Birdem points to the major management problem that prevails at this institute. Birdem is the continuation of an out-patients clinic for the diabetics set up in tin sheds at Segunbagicha, Dhaka in 1957 by the late Professor Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim. For over three decades, Professor Ibrahim succeeded in generating awareness on diabetes in the country through free-of-cost quality services, health education, and motivation. Under his leadership the institute was transformed into a huge complex that was recognised globally as an institution of excellence. Professor Ibrahim was a highly disciplined man. I had the privilege of meeting him in his office. During our conversation he had to open his briefcase. I was surprised to see that he maintained a very orderly briefcase which had only those materials he required for the day. He used to go round the hospital and always insisted upon doctors to do their best. He died in 1989.

The character of the organisation changed dramatically after his death. Greed instead of service has taken it over. It was a shocking revelation in the press about three years ago that a patient was left untreated and had to

die at Birdem as his relatives were late in procuring the treatment money (The Ittefaq, 25 November, 2003). Recently, Birdem doctors went on strike protesting against a decision not to renew their contractual services. The Birdem authorities have now conceded to the demands of the doctors. But it raises some grave issues regarding Birdem's management. I met a leading member of the Birdem establishment a few years ago and was surprised to hear about the contractual nature of employment that the institute was contemplating for its physicians. Doctors are human beings too! They also need security to function. Birdem has now been taken over by people who want to view health care service in terms of profit and business. Various facilities are now available for the rich with money and not for common people with little budget for whom Professor Ibrahim used to feel very deeply.

Indeed, Birdem needs a major shake-up if it wants to tread the path chalked by its benevolent founder the late Professor Ibrahim.
Dr. Rashid Sarkar
On e-mail



Humiliating capitulation!

It's long since Bangladesh started playing cricket. If they continue playing cricket in the manner as they are now in Sri Lanka, cricket fans in Bangladesh will find solace by forgetting the game. If anybody talks about the team's being greenhorn to favour the cricketers, he or she would not be justified. The cricketers have too much experience as well as training to at least avoid scoring 89 and 62 all out!

Sheer irresponsibility, frivolity and nonchalance are bringing bad name to the nation. They are fondly called Tigers by the whole cricket world but they are not doing justice to the title. The government has been spending a lot of money for these cricketers.

The blame certainly can't be laid on the pitch as the Lankans scored runs without facing any trouble. Even though the conditions were to some extent bowler-friendly, there was no reason to perform so badly.

Sri Lanka deserve credit for Bangladesh's shameful capitulation. Their performance has been excellent.

Now the premise 'Bangladesh play good cricket accidentally' would be justified to the pundits who were never impressed by our performance.

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

Hilsa export

We are deprived of the good taste of hilsa for many years because of its high price in the local market. We should also remember that the export of hilsa brings foreign exchange for the country.

I personally feel that the government's recent decision to stop export of hilsa and its storing/freezing needs rethinking.

"If we have a headache we should take medicine and not cut off the head". Hilsa export is being stopped on the argument that it is much cheaper in India and much dearer in Dhaka. I really don't think any businessman will sell his product where it is not more profitable. So, if it is selling at Tk 600 in Dhaka why will they sell it at a cheaper price across the border? There must be other stories behind it! The government is losing foreign currency for the LC or TT made at the so called price of 1\$ or 2 \$ per hilsa. I feel the government should take care

of this point immediately, instead of stopping export.

It has also been reported that the government is going to stop storing/freezing of hilsa. But unless freezing/ storing is allowed how can the fish be preserved in good condition? Definitely, all the fish cannot be consumed in one day and unless freezing/storing facilities are there, people may fall sick by eating rotten fish. Also storing/freezing is required for recycling in the market.

Another point is that many importers from outside the country have already invested a lot of money either in advance or sending LC/TT in this hilsa business. If we suddenly stop the export trade what will happen to them? The government should have given early warning before stopping export of hilsa.

I have some suggestions so that Bangladeshis can enjoy their hilsa and at the same time the country earns foreign exchange:

1) Those who have already got the LC or TT may be allowed to export till the prescribed quantity in LC/TT is exhausted.

2) In order to earn more foreign exchange and rein in some unscrupulous businessmen, an amount may be fixed as the price of hilsa by the government below which export will not be permitted.

3) Each exporter can be

given a quota to export keeping aside enough hilsa for the country.

I am aware of the government's expertise on the subject. I am sure they can figure out a better way to protect the hilsa for our own people as well as a good source of foreign currency earning.

S A H M Tauhid
DOHS, Baridhara, Dhaka



G o l a p g a n j Pourashava

A few years back , Golapganj Sadar area of Sylhet district was declared a Pourashava along with some more places. But it has been found that while people of the area are practically getting no service, taxes have been imposed which are a burden on them. Whatever grants are made by the government, the people are not benefited. People of the area are not at all interested in the Pourashava. Rather, they want to be relieved of the harassment by the Pourashava.

I, therefore, appeal to Ministry of LGRD to cancel Golapganj Pourashava at the earliest and save the people of the locality from harassment by the municipal body.

Rowshan Ali
Fulbari, Sylhet

Apology for cricket!

In the first innings of the second Test, Bangladesh registered their lowest total in a completed innings (62). This also happens to be the lowest completed Test innings on Sri Lankan soil. To make matters worse, Ashraful's first innings duck puts him alongside Khaled Mashud (Pilot) with the most ducks (11) recorded by a Bangladeshi batsman in Tests. To add further insult to injury, Bangladesh's innings lasted only 152 balls. This is the fourth shortest completed Test innings ever.

The Great Muralitharan now has 687 wickets. He's probably going to bag 13 more wickets during this Test series. The way our batsmen are performing time and again, why shouldn't Murali get those wickets and enter the 700 Test wicket club only to make another Great, Shane Warne, history?

I think it's about time somebody stands up and makes a public apology for squandering taxpayers' money in the name of playing cricket.

Asrar Chowdhury
Department of Economics Jahangirnagar University

Foreign ruler issue

The views expressed in your daily on June 24 in the "Point-Counter Point" page by Faruque Hasan in his article "The Battle of Palashi" have drawn my attention. He tried to show that both of the warriors were foreigners. For your kind information, Mr. Faruque Hasan, from the beginning of the eleventh century up to 1857, all the Indian emperors were of foreign origin. But the Indian emperors, including the Mughals and others, had huge differences with the East India Company and British Raj. All the Indian emperors loved their empires and tenants, but the East India Company and British Raj didn't.

The British came here for looting our assets. The foreign-origin Indian emperors didn't rob us or take our money away to their forefathers' land.

Mustahidur Rahman Fuad
Boyra Main Road New Market, Khulna

A good article

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Mr. Md. Anwarul Kabir for his article entitled "The 'confessional statements' and journalistic ethics" published on June 26. He has rightfully raised the question of journalistic ethics which the media has violated willingly or non-willingly in publishing so called confessional statements.

The authenticity of the so called 'confessional statements' is yet to be investigated. It has been implic-

itly understood that the very objective of the people who have distributed the transcripts of interrogations of the political bigwigs is to erode to the image of the party chiefs, especially Hasina's with a view to dismantling the AL, an umbrella for the progressive people of the country. For this, they are trying to equate Sheikh Hasina with Khaleda Zia in terms of involvement in corruption.

However, the perceptions of the common people are completely different. Khaleda's last tenure witnessed endless corruption at the state level. Besides, due to the phenomenon of price hiking at an exponential rate, the people under her regime suffered much. Whereas, Hasina, during her regime could successfully control the market. Though Hasina's period was not corruption free, still it was at a tolerable level. Moreover, the Chittagong Hill Tracts treaty and the water treaty with India carried out by the AL government were applauded widely.

Finally, I would like to request the media to reveal the truths instead of becoming biased.

Rouf Ahmed
Kamal Ataturk Avenue Banani, Dhaka

Controlling narcotics

Recently, illegal possession of alcoholic beverages and prosecution by court have made headlines in our national dailies.

The Narcotics Control Act which was perhaps enacted or amended 60 years ago has always appeared hypocritical in its execution.

Consumption of alcohol has increased manifold in the last three decades as the population grew. It is not a hidden fact that bars, clubs and first class hotels in Dhaka and other metropolitan cities sell alcoholic beverages to its members and clients without questioning. Elites of the society are also seen happily consuming alcoholic beverages in diplomatic parties. There is no official ban on importing alcoholic beverages and there are licensed importers and warehouses. It is a source of revenue for the government. My point is that either impose a complete ban on import, sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages or make it completely free. There cannot be any rules or act in between!

There are Muslim countries in the Middle East and the Far East which have allowed consumption of alcoholic drinks without any restriction but punishment is also meted out for drunken behaviour or driving as in other non-Muslim countries around the world. These countries feel that there are other serious social problems for the narcotic department to tackle, like drugs and its derivatives that are degenerating the young generation.

It is time our government came out with a revised and transparent narcotics control policy. The cat and mouse play should stop!

Ziauddin Ahmed
One e-mail

Comments

I strongly disagree with Paul Kokoski's letter to DS (June 3) which criticises embryonic stem cell research.

These cells have no human lives. An embryonic stem cell is not even a fetus. It is a cluster of about 150 cells the size of the period at the end of this sentence. They are currently discarded anyway. Why do opponents of this research think it is more moral to wash stem cells down a drain than to use them to help save and improve millions of lives? You and I have lives, embryonic stem cells do not.

If opponents insist on thinking of embryonic stem cells as having "lives," why not think of them as soldiers who are sacrificed to protect all of us in the war we are all fighting to stay healthy.

No words can accurately describe the horrific symptoms that accompany diseases like Alzheimer's, Lou Gehrig's, muscular dystrophy, diabetes and stroke, to name a few for which embryonic stem cell research holds great promise. These conditions manifest themselves with unbearable pain, disfigurement, mental incapacitation and amputation.

Arnie Levitt
Solon, Iowa, USA

Bangladeshis in Kuwait

People came to Kuwait not only for working but also to prove that Bangladeshis are sincere and honest.

But the Kuwait government has banned issuance of work permit to Bangladeshis. And even they have banned transfer of residence from one company to another. This is a very harsh decision which the Kuwait government has never taken with regard to nationals from other countries.

The government of Bangladesh should look into the matter.
Taimur Bin Salam (Shuvo)
Web Developer

Age and leadership

A political leader who leads a nation should have certain traits like charisma, vision, intellectual stimulation, inspiration, etc. attained over the period of working life through the process of learning. Successful leaders draw on expertise and experience from all areas of their lives.

People follow a leader because of his traits that influence them to work in the direction he wants, as people believe their leader will not let them down. People work for him because of the future-picture inscribed by the leader in their minds the roadmap of economic and personal emancipation. The leader shows new ways of looking at problems that take them to new heights transcending the barriers in the way of success.

Evidently, a democratically elected national leader acquires the qualities and depend on various factors; otherwise he can't earn people's mandate to cross the stages from the lowest level to the topmost echelon of power, the bottom-up approach of creating leadership.

Unfortunately, our nation never virtually saw a leader coming through the bottom up approach-- the only way of leadership generation. This is not a smooth way for opportunistic politicians since it is a path that requires commitment, creativity, love for people and the



country etc. So, opposed to this approach, the opportunistic leaders have initiated top-down approach in creating national leaders. If we look at the performances of the last two prime ministers, it becomes clear to us how leaders are being imposed upon the nation.

The recent move to impose age bar in party politics is a conspiracy to de-motivate the experienced, seasoned, tested and committed leaders who maintained low profile in party politics due to the unwholesome top-down approach in creating successive leaderships. Old is Gold!

We expect this government to restructure party politics where leaders will be created by the people, before holding any election in future.

Muklesur Rahman, MBA (MIS)
Dhanmondi

A foreign ruler?

I carefully read the informative piece "The Battle of Palashi" by Faruque Hasan on June 24, 2007. I thank the writer for providing us with valuable information. However, his conclusion is based on a fundamentally wrong premise.

A foreign ruler is not necessarily the one who has a foreign origin. Arnold Schwarzenegger is an Austrian born who rules California now. Americans aren't calling him a foreign ruler just because he was born outside America. Nicolas Sarkozy, son of a Hungarian fleeing the communism state, is now the French president. French voters did not consider him a foreign ruler. When Sonia Gandhi of Italian origin was about to become the prime minister of India, Indians did not consider her as a foreign ruler, except for the ultra zealous Hindu fanatics.

Defining someone as a foreign ruler because of ethnic origin is racial thinking at best.

So what defines foreign rulers? "It's the economy stupid". Despite having foreign origins Sarkozy, Schwarzenegger, Sonia Gandhi pledged their allegiance to their adopted countries. They don't serve any masters in the countries of their origin; they are not systematically draining massive wealth from these countries. As a ruler of "Sube Bangla" Sirajuddaulah was born in Patna, Bihar, a city in Sube Bangla. He was neither foreign-born nor a foreign ruler of "Sube Bangla". The Nawab had his treasury in Murshidabad and never drained massive wealth to a foreign land. On the contrary, East India Company systematically drained massive wealth from Bengal to England, their masters were in England. A section of Hindus termed Siraj cruel, inexperienced, unworthy and another foreign ruler as long as they were in the fallacy that British were serving their economic interests against Muslims. The widespread famine and poverty caused by colossal drainage of wealth gave birth to massive anti-British movements. Consequently, Bengali Hindus looked for a different hero (Siraj) against the British villains.

On the other hand, native rulers can be foreign too when they serve foreign masters and drain enormous wealth from the country. Following the battle of Palashi and gaining control over "Sube Bangla" Clive and his men looted the treasury and sent shiploads of wealth to England. After winning the 2001 election, the BNP leaders plundered the country and transferred plane-loads of wealth and billions of dollars to foreign countries. (Please check "The dark age of devel-



opment since 2001" The Daily Star, Point-Counterpoint, January 09, 2007). Just as many died from famine during the two centuries of British rule, hunger has forced Dipali and Manjuara to commit suicide following a few years of BNP-Jamaat rule. They are the East India Company of 21st century!

Nawab Siraj was a native ruler who cared for the natives and not for the foreign masters. On the contrary, Clive and his men were serving a British company and cared to serve the company at the cost of the natives. The Battle of Palashi was fought for forceful transfer of proprietary rights over Bengal, from the native ruler to a foreign ruler. In independent Bangladesh, we have enough reason to be emotional about the Battle of Palashi. We have got enough reason to consider Sirajuddaulah as a symbol of independent Bengal against the British colonial forces and their native collaborators.

Zakaria Khondker
Boston, USA

Power generation

Your staff correspondent's report (July 6) about the visit to Bangkok is somewhat baffling. One can understand going to Yangon for negotiating a deal for hydro power supply to Bangladesh. This is a reasonable and fairly viable approach; provided there is security for the transmission line to Bangladesh. This passes through areas both in Myanmar and Bangladesh, where terrorism has taken roots. If this is secured, we should negotiate a reasonable deal on a win-win principle. However going to Thailand for advice on power conservation and nuclear power plants is surprising! Thailand

has no capability of manufacturing nuclear power plants, and we will be wasting our time there.

I firmly believe that a visit to South Africa would be far more useful than spending time in Thailand. For information: South Africa manufactures and has a number of latest generation nuclear power plants which are the safest nuclear reactors with fail safe automated shutdown built into the reactor design, which has been publicly tested. But will someone who matters listen to it? I am willing to brief the persons concerned on the matter, as captive power generation has been my work and hobby since 1986.

Now I am retired and would like to help the authorities in any manner in the national interest. My only selfish reward is in the pride of performance.

S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka

Good point raised

I express my appreciation to M. Adil Khan for his article "Whom should we go after: corruption or the corrupt?"

I believe this well-written piece will further enlighten our Anti Corruption Commission.

Abed Sakhawat
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