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Lost glory of Dhaka University

That the university, which imparts ethics, morality, justice, honesty and humanity plays an important role in building the nation needs no telling. And Dhaka University is no exception to this. It contributed greatly to the Language Movement in 1952, in the Liberation War, the fall of autocratic regimes, the restoration of democracy in 1991 etc. At the same time, it produced world famous scholars, scientists, litterateurs, for which it is called the Oxford of the East. But some recent incidents - the murder of a private medical college student, the sexual harassment of female students, the fake students in various departments, leakage of question papers, the delay in publishing results, session jams, and the recent extortion in a hall have tarnished the image of the university.

As the teachers and students of this institution are the conscience of the nation, they should make all out concerted efforts to bring back the lost glory of this institution.
Md. Zahangir Alom
English teacher
International Laboratory
Institute
Dhalpur, Dhaka



PHOTO: STAR

Cleaning Banani Lake

Your staff correspondent's report about Warid Telecom cleaning up the Banani Lake is very good news for the people living there. It is a great example of corporate social responsibility, shown by Warid Telecom. Congratulations to them for performing a much needed civic service for the common benefit of all residents.

Could we the Gulshan residents, request some organisation through this column to please clean up the lake bank. This lake has an excellent walkway on its western bank, from the Badda Link Road all the way down to the Shooting Club. Many residents go for walks in the morning and evening alongside the lake bank. Unfortunately, the smell of kitchen refuse and garbage being dumped there creates a smelly environment for walking.

I hope maybe one of our mobile phone operators, or any business house may please volunteer to take up this civic duty, for the improvement of this environment. On behalf of many lakeside walkers, I hope that this appeal will be responded to.
S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka

Unbecoming of a captain

This is not for the first time that Ashraf, an overrated cricket player in terms of his performance, showed his poor manners. It started with his slapping a teen-age cricket fan a few months back and he did not offer any public apology for the misdeed. Even BCB appeared to be very lenient towards him! And now he has

ridiculed coach Siddons for his recent apology to the cricket fans of Bangladesh as the team performed miserably in Australia. Does Ashraf have the ability to understand the philosophy behind seeking apology? This apology is for showing respect to people's love for cricket.

Ashraf should be ashamed that being a foreigner Siddons can feel the pain of Bangladeshi fans, but unfortunately he (Ashraf) cannot. Now I wonder how he is leading the national team and what the BCB is doing in dealing with him.
Tanzim
University of Dhaka

Remembering a good soul

I was shocked to hear the news of sudden demise of the renowned and veteran Engineer, Mr Quamrul Islam Siddiqui in the USA on 1 September.

I was very much fascinated and charmed to see his versatility and work procedures, determination and commitment to the nation while he was the Chief Engineer of the LGED. He had a very pragmatic clear vision and mission to go ahead and strong commitment to implement the decisions, despite many impediments. He knew the art of manoeuvring, the way to reach the goals and achieve expected results by virtue of his professionalism, dedication and monitoring. Eventually, under his dynamic leadership the LGED was able to reach the peak and was the pioneer of all rural infrastructure development activities, particularly with donors' contributions

and assistance, strengthening the rural road net working across the country through RMP, roadside plantation and local initiative schemes and so on.

He had very strong negotiating skills. His professionalism, far-sightedness and effective use of human resources played very significant roles in achieving success as well as career management that made him very popular in the donor community, within social professional groups and common people of the country.

I had several opportunities to interact with him in the management of WFP assisted LGED projects across the country and I was charmed and fascinated to see his dynamism and instant instructions and advice. I am sure his well-defined contributions in rural socio economic development have been very significant.
Nasar
One-mail

Train service

The train is regarded as a cheap, safe, comfortable and fast moving transport for carrying both passengers and commodities. It can carry a huge number of people and goods at a time. It is environment friendly compared to other mechanized transports as it uses less fuel, considering the number of passengers and volume of commodities. Ours is a small country.

We should have developed rail connection among all big cities and towns.
It is high time to focus on this public transport in the greater interest of the country.
Harun-Or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Sangsad Bhaban

The Sangsad Bhaban at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in Dhaka is a wonder of modern architecture. It is one of the largest and most spectacular parliament buildings in the world.

The area was often crowded with families spending their time together. But now people are not allowed to get inside. Apparently,

security is the reason why people are not allowed to get in. But I think the situation has changed a lot and people should be allowed to visit the area once again.

Md. Shobuj Chowdhury
Dhaka



Obama's prospects

Enjoying massive black, Hispanic and young white support, Obama will win in a landslide.

Polls show that the first Democratic African-American presidential nominee, Senator Barack Obama, enjoys in the range of 90 per cent of African-American support and a high percentage of Hispanic support. If he holds this massive support among African-American and Hispanic voters, Obama might need only 30 per cent support of white voters to win in a landslide. This is also within his reach, as vast majority of young white voters seem to support Senator Obama.

On the other hand, his Republican rival, Senator John McCain, has the support of barely four per cent of African-American and 20 per cent support of Hispanic voters. The tight race shows his support coming almost exclusively from middle-aged whites who support him by a massive margin. However, these polls are highly misleading as phone-in polls have no way to reach young white voters as most of them use only cell phones and have no land phone lines. As such, Senator Obama's lead over Senator McCain may be far more substantial than the polls suggest.

Senator Barack Obama has galvanised African-American, Hispanic and young white voters who are likely to turn up massively on the election day to hand him a landslide victory, unless partisan Republican electoral officials resort to massive disenfranchisement of black voters as they did in 2000 Florida race. But the world, including young American soldiers who are risking their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan in the name of democracy, will be watching.

It may also be pointed out that most commentators fail to realise that democracy is not about leaders, but about the people and their right to choose. As Mr. Obama so correctly said: "It is not about me, it is not about any political party, it is about you the people." It is the cross-sections of American people belonging to various demographic groups, not just the middle-aged whites, who will elect Senator Barack Obama as the next president of the United States of America.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa
Canada

NRBs

There are about five million non-resident Bangladeshis around the world. They are working tirelessly & send the hard earned foreign currency back home. Every moment they keep their beloved country in their hearts. There are many non residents from many countries who vote in their national election & even elect member of parliament from the expatriates.

When the government in a third world country tries to crush the opposition, then if there are some MPs from the expatriates they can reach the human rights organisations or other governments very easily. This is healthy for democracy. There is a check & balance & the country usually benefits. The second generation Bangladeshis can get involved in the process and with their modern diverse experience accelerate the development of the country.

We need educated, well experienced & dedicated members of parliament. The time has come to end the political life of corrupt individuals. Otherwise, there will be no progress. Election is not the solution.

Education, poverty eradication, economic development, political stability & increased literacy etc are the main objectives. The expatriates along with the people of Bangladesh can bring about these changes.
Shafiq Rahman
Australia

Traffic jam at Paribagh

Paribagh, near the mosque, is a point where vehicular traffic & rickshaws are meeting from different directions such as, traffic from the east from Hotel Sheraton side, from Bangla Motor (north), from the PG Hospital (south) and from the Elephant Road--Hatirpool--Central Road and Dhanmondi (west).

The traffic police department should consider posting at least one traffic policeman at Paribagh point to reduce traffic jam.

Hope the authorities concerned will look into the matter with a sense of urgency.
Sirajul Islam
Paribagh
Dhaka

Sexual harassment by teachers

I am writing this in response to Md Zillur Rahman and Adnan Karim's letters published in your daily on September 5, 2008 entitled 'Sexual harassment in educational institutions'.

I fully agree with Mr. Karim when he says many eminent teachers of our public universities ignoring their professional ethics calculatingly and routinely take advantage of the feelings and sentiments of quite a good number of naive girl students just to seduce them. One of my closest friends was such a victim who had to enter into a long relationship with one of the well-known teachers of English department of a famed public university at his continuous insistence. It took her two full years to find out that the teacher was a two-faced rogue who not only had such relationships with many other female students of the department in the past but also used to have so called 'affairs' with more than one person concurrently. He also had a rented flat to satisfy his amorous exploits. I must admire this friend of mine who had the guts and courage to survive the humiliation and mental shock, and is finally leading a normal life. But this does not happen to all the girls who are enticed into such relationships, and in extreme cases many even commit suicide to get rid of their disgrace. Interestingly enough, knowing it very well that my friend is now married, this teacher often shamelessly calls her to revive the relationship lying patently that he never had any other girl in his life except her.

I believe it is time our newspapers did an extensive investigative reporting on this problem or these teachers would go on doing profound harm not only to innocent female students but also to society at large.

Nasrin Pervin
Dhanmondi
Dhaka

Biman tickets

Almost all flights of Biman operate with a few vacant seats. But by offering 90% rebated subject to load (sub-load) passages to the retired employees and their immediate family members, the airline can easily earn substantial amounts of revenue on each flight from otherwise empty seats which remain unutilised all through. As regards the passage facilities, though it may sound unbelievable, all retired employees, other than the cockpit crew, are entitled to only a total of ten free tickets to be entitled on completion of each year unlike all other international airlines of the world. All retired cockpit crew and their family members during their lifetime as well as even after their death, are entitled to a large number of free and rebated passages vide admin order no 15 and 16 / 2001 dated 19th July 2001.

They, including their family members, are also entitled to an unlimited number of 90% rebated passages but on firm basis i.e. against revenue seats only.

I am confident that the retired employees and their family members will be happy and remain obliged to the management if 90% rebated sub-load passage facilities are approved in their favour as per the same terms and conditions permissible to the cockpit crew.

A.B.M. Zakaria
Assistant Manager Operations (retired)
Flight Operations Department
East Sheurapara
Mirpur, Dhaka

Teachers' role

As a school student I want to say that our secondary education cannot give us enough scope that we deserve. What is the reason behind it? Nowadays it's a common question which arises in the minds of the students-- are our teachers responsible for this?

Better teaching is needed to improve the overall standard of education.

Md. Mohiuddin Momen
Garib-E-Newaz High school
Halisahar
Chittagong

Signal lights

Almost all signal lights are non-functional in the port city. Traffic police control the vehicles with their hands. Sometimes they fail due to irresponsible driving.

I urge the traffic authorities to restore the signal lights and that will remove eighty percent of the traffic jam!
Md. Ariful Haque
Dept. of Microbiology
University of Chittagong

Abus passenger

While travelling in the Volvo bus regularly I discovered one person who behaves unusually. First, he takes a seat in the lower compartment and search for a woman who is sitting alone. Then he immediately moves to that position. If there is no such position, he goes to the upper compartment and waits for a chance. When the bus comes near a stoppage he searches for the opportunity in both compartments. One day I found one woman changing her seat just to avoid this gentleman. Once I found him just before my seat. I observed he was sweating and using his handkerchief to clear his forehead.

Such behaviour could be extremely irritating to the women passengers.
Engr. Zahir U. Hyder
One-mail

Why this capitulation?

The present government had started its journey with a big bang

to fight corruption and clean up politics. We, the people, had played our role in extending full support to the government. We did it in the hope that the neutral caretaker government would usher in a new era of clean governance in our country.

Now, after long 20 months, what do we see? More hardship due to increased corruption, high prices beyond imagination, release of all corrupt people and uncertainty about our future and the future of our country.

We did not want this. We wanted this country to be corruption free. We hoped the government would create a congenial atmosphere for a free, fair and credible election, so that we get a good government which would ensure a bright future for the country and restore our dignity as a nation.

Now, it seems the government has moved away from its path. We suspect the corrupt money has changed hands and it is again playing the same old role that dominated politics and business

for so many years. We tend to believe that in the coming general election, if it is at all held, the same old and corrupt politicians and businessmen will return to power because the government seems to have compromised with them, and did it without consulting us, the people.

We do not know how much corruption has grabbed this government but we do know that inefficient handling has pushed the prices of essential items beyond the buying capacity of the common people. They have released the corrupt people who were arrested with so much fanfare.

We fear this government will leave behind a lesson for corrupt politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen and that lesson is-- if you resort to corruption, do it in a big way for a big amount, so that once caught you can spend enough to get away.

Again, we find ourselves in a state of hopelessness.

Anwar ul Alam
Gulshan, Dhaka

Domestic help



AZIZUR RAHIM PEU / DRINKNEWS

Many recent articles, including quotations from conferences on the subject, have spoken of the importance of 'changing attitudes towards child domestic help' but how long can such children wait?

I know, from conversations with school children in Moral Education (or PSHE) classes on child labour, that attitudes are indeed changing. Some of the new generation of children are shocked at how their own families treat their maidservants and tell me so. I even remember one girl telling me she spent over an hour a day teaching her maidservant Bengali and English! So we may be able to hope for better things twenty years hence - but what do we do in the meantime?

Am I just a mad foreigner or is compulsory registration of child domestic workers quite impossible? I imagine a reputable Bangladeshi NGO, including lawyers - and maybe connected with a Law School whose members could do a period of compulsory work with it - being authorised to do this work. It would need certain legal rights and initial funding to set up a number of offices with a computer or two, and interviewing rooms, where future employers and the children concerned, with their guardians, should go for registration. A short training session, maybe on DVD, is surely needed, for all the members of the family - and maybe it should be shown regularly on television? Firm guidelines should be specified, including, for both parties, suggestions on hours, payment procedures, clothes, free time, duties - and procedures for either party if they wish to end the agreement. Occasional visits to the employer's home should be made by the officials, with or without notice) to ensure all is well.

Especially important are guidelines for appropriate behaviour, on both sides, including the sort of comments that are 'out of bounds'. No sensitivity should be shown to those who may not want to discuss such matters. For example, it is not acceptable for a male

member of the family, when alone in the house with a teenage maid, to ask anything suggestive! On one such occasion, the terrified Garo maid, went to her room, packed her bags and fled the house and Dhaka. The deeply offensive question (also a favourite for boys making anonymous phone calls) was put by an old man of the family.....

Would a lower age limit work? I doubt it. I know of good families who take in a young child almost as an adopted child. It is what was going on in my (Victorian) reverend grandfather's day when, in the slums of Merseyside, my grandmother always had some little girl from a poor family 'living in'. I am told she was usually more trouble than she was worth to start with but, by the time she left, had received a modicum of education and was competent to run her own home and life! Done with genuine care and respect for the child, this can still be a major act of charity.

Such a programme need not cost an arm and a leg. Bribery and corruption by employers intending to be abusive should be minimal..... And would any decent employer refuse to go through such a procedure? I think not.

The key question is surely, "Doesn't this society owe any obligation to child domestic workers when the situation of many of them, according to the evidence, needs to be regularly and carefully monitored and their guardians are usually in no position to do this?"

All arrangements, in any case, will only be needed for a few decades as child labour should disappear altogether, God willing, as the country becomes like other developed countries where those who want domestic service have to pay a decent wage for it to some adult for whom it is a proper career that carries a lot of respect. It is good to see that happening here already, in some households.

Angela Robinson
Gulshan, Dhaka

EC and court order

The HC has validated participation of candidates in the recently concluded 13 local council elections on party basis. Accordingly, the elections were held and the political parties participated in the campaign, except the BNP which decided not to contest the elections on party basis.

Now we have come to know that the EC wants all elected candidates to resign from their party positions based on a former rule of the EC. The question of primary membership of the party is not clear to me yet. We have seen at least three mayors responding positively so far and

the fourth one might follow suit. May be, all councillors might also obey the EC's order.

My question is: when the court has allowed them to participate with political identity and the EC has also agreed to obey the court order without making any appeal in the SC against the order of the court, doesn't the EC's order to resign from party positions stand cancelled automatically?

I would appreciate a clarification on this legal matter.
A reader
One-mail

The holy month

The holy month of Ramadan

approaches us with a fresh appeal on the basis of the last & final revelation the Holy Quran.

A person, family and the government must establish the dictums outlined in the Holy Quran for a just, peaceful and corruption-free society.

Taking bank interests, bribe, boozing and gambling are the forbidden acts which must be abandoned once and for all.

The nation will get the blessings of the Almighty not only during the holy month of Ramadan but also the whole year.

Golam Ashraf
BTM Mayfair Apartment
Gulshan, Dhaka