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Turkish embassy clarifies

It was good to read the letter in The Daily Star (6 May 2009) of Mr. M. Sanaul Huq entitled "A Tale of Two Armies" where he made rightful comments on the Turkish Army, second largest in NATO. However, I understand that due to lack of information about Turkey, Mr. Huq thinks that Turkey has a "perennial Kurdish problem."

The Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin have been living in peace side by side for at least a thousand years in Anatolia. Both during the World War I and in the Independence War of Turkey, led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Kurds and the Turks fought together against the occupation forces. Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin have always been great contributors to the Turkish economic, cultural and political life.

Today, in Turkish parliament, in different political parties there are a good number of MPs with Kurdish ethnic background. However, for the past 25 years the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party), an organisation finding safe heaven in the North of Iraq and recognised as terrorist by the US, the EU and Australia, claimed thousands of lives in Turkey. So, it may be better to put the record straight: Turkey does not have a "perennial Kurdish problem", but "terrorism problem for the past 25 years."

Sakir Ozkan Torunlar
Ambassador of Turkey in Dhaka

Quality seeds

Agriculture is our backbone. So without it we can't imagine anything. But lack of knowledge is responsible for the backwardness of our agricultural sector. The problems are:

1. Lack of skilled manpower.
2. Illiterate farmers.
3. Lack of modern agricultural tools.
4. Lack of quality seeds.

If we use quality seeds, we will produce more crops, and this will help us attain self-sufficiency in food.

MD. Suruzzaman
Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University

Pertinent point

Modern science has presented us various wonderful and interesting things. Satellite channels are remarkable among them. But those are abused too. Sometimes young boys and girls turn their attention so much to satellite channels that they forget everything else, even their studies.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Fadil Madrasa
Chittagong

Education commission

The government has announced a new education commission. The new commission will follow Dr. Quadrante - Khuda Education

Commission which was the first education commission in Bangladesh. To form a new education commission, a committee was announced on 8 April.

The first meeting of this committee was held on May 3. In the first meeting they addressed the issue of primary education syllabus.

We hope the recommendations of the commission will be implemented in the greater interest of the nation. Our education system really needs some streamlining.

Mahfuzur Rahman Manik
IER, DU

Recession and mobile phone

Recession has hit every sector and our booming mobile phone industry is no exception. Every cell phone operator is experiencing decline in the number of new subscribers' registration. They are blaming the high tax on Sim (subscribers identity module) as the main reason for this. So in order to encourage the users to activate the old unused Sim, mobile operators have come up with various promotional offers recently. They are declaring 100% to 300% recharge bonus and some are offering to give Tk 1,000 reward bonus to the users who have not used their Sim for a long period of time. Definitely, these promotional offers are unique and clever marketing policy on the part of the mobile operators and I find no harm in them. But I think they are treating their active users unfairly in the process. They are giving attractive offers to the subscribers who didn't use their Sim, but why will the active users be deprived? What harm they did to the operators by using their Sim constantly? I think if the operators encourage the inactive Sim users, they should also declare reward for the active users at the same time in order to treat all equally.

Moreover, we see whenever any mobile operator slashes their tariff, they highlight it in the media. But recently we have seen that most of the operators have increased their friends and family tariff charge without informing the people through any advertisement. This is also unfair and discriminatory.

We, the general subscribers, are always falling victim to the clever marketing strategy of the operators.

Nazmus Saquib
Dept. of English
Stamford University
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Contain sound pollution

Noise pollution in Dhaka is becoming unbearable, it is almost as big a problem as scarcity of water and power failures, but it doesn't receive any attention from the authorities. There is a simple solution: ban all hydraulic horns and loudspeaker use between 11:00pm and 7:00am, ban the

use of cutters on Fridays in residential areas, all cutters should be used within the building and not on the pavement or street, have better traffic control, so that people don't need to use their horns so often.

This means that they need a task force to go around and fine the institutions using loudspeakers and drivers using hydraulic horns within these hours. This will be very popular with the people.

S. Shawkat
Gulshan, Dhaka

No place for the poor!

The other day I was going to my classes near the Central Road. Initially I thought of walking but the heat compelled me to take a rickshaw. I was nearly there when the driver stopped near a shop. I was about to ask him why did he stop suddenly but he went to the shop without answering me and came back with a bottle of mineral water. When he started off again, he smiled very feebly and replied, "Water crisis at home, apa. I came out early not only with an empty stomach but thirsty as well."

The man left me completely speechless. I asked myself where and how we are living-- in a city where a man ridden with poverty cannot even drink water free of charge!

Shifat Nazmee
Maple-Leaf International School

Hasina, Khaleda at rallies

The May 4 DS editorial is a fresh reminder to both the leaders. But I am sure, none of them is aware of the real public feelings about them and do not bother to know the mindset of today's general people.

Both of them are surrounded by some opportunists and some are diehard conservatives. These conservative advisers never change their age old theories and continue to play the blame game. They have not learnt anything from the 1/11 as the DS has said.

But there are some clear differences in personality between the two leaders. It seems one has learnt a little but another has not learnt a bit. One has come out a bit from within her old surroundings and is acting or trying to act forcefully.

Formation of a new cabinet, distancing her from student cadres, allowing the law enforcing agencies to act independently, personally intervening in many important decisions, keeping away the money mongers and initiating some bold steps to control price, boosting production in the agriculture sector and restarting some production units are some of the noteworthy developments. She has also shown her uprightness by reprimanding her cabinet colleagues and top bureaucrats to mind their

respect duties.

On the other hand, the other leader seems to have learnt absolutely nothing. In her public address in the rally, she attacked the CTG, which successfully held a national election with a genuine voter list in transparent ballot boxes. The election was internationally acclaimed, she has claimed the cantonment house as her own and was sarcastic about the cancellation of the lease. She has asked the PM to give job to one member from each family in the country etc. or to quit. As if, the PM should have called one person from every home in the country right on the day she resumed office as PM and issue appointment letters. She has set many such ridiculous demands.

Yes, the PM promised in her election manifesto to give jobs to one member from each family. She might have made the promise keeping in mind that she would create jobs by expanding development works.

Sorry, I am not ready to equate one with the other because one has learnt a bit while the other one didn't. One is upset for her failure to implement her "election engineering" while the other one is trying to change herself and give something new to the nation.

I thank the DS for addressing both the leaders. I hope they will try to correct themselves in dealing with national issues.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Agriculture Policy 2009

The stakeholders might be glad to know that the Ministry of Agriculture has geared up its efforts to get the draft 'National Agriculture Policy' prepared by the Technical Working Group (TWG) approved for final release. To this end, a meeting of the TWG was held on April 22 last in the conference room of the Ministry of Agriculture which was presided over by the TWG Convener Additional Secretary (PPC) A.Z.M. Shafiqul Alam. In this meeting the TWG incorporated various suggestions received from different ministries/divisions in the draft policy. Now a national level meeting will be arranged to exchange/share public opinions plus actual beneficiaries' views on the draft policy.

It is sincerely hoped that the government will soon pass the National Agriculture Policy 2009 and put the same into operation.

Professor M Zahidul Haque

Chairman

Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System

SAU, Dhaka

Swine flu

I guess it was predictable. Yes, in case you didn't know, some people say the virus will devastate the pig-gobbling-West. Yankee infidels will be doomed, and the faithful spared.

Even in Egypt, which hasn't

May Day and workers' rights



May day, the political version, - is an American holiday -- once celebrated everywhere in the world except America. The holiday is most often associated with the commemoration of social and economic achievements of the labour movement for a basic right

we're now in the process of losing. The day began as workers campaigned for an eight-hour day - we all are aware of its history. But, what is actually happening? The industrial mode of production has divided society into two classes, those who own the means of production (the factories, cor-

reported a single case of swine flu, over 300,000 pigs were killed.

Swine flu is one of scores of diseases that have evolved from other life forms to humans. Look up zoonosis. Some fanatics clearly don't heed the call to read or to track developments in the epidemic that they are otherwise obsessed with; they don't or won't understand that the latest information suggests that we are more likely to contract swine flu from another human than a pig. This far, there isn't a single confirmed pig to human transmission (see FAQs for swine flu on www.who.int).

Fawzia Rasheed

One-mail

Khaleda Zia's house

While the nation is steeped in chronic problems of power cuts for hours together in this unbearable hot climate coupled with erratic water supply, many educational institutions are being closed one after another for violent activities of a section of students and sliding law and order, there is a new issue in the national arena involving the cancellation of Khleda Zia's one taka house in the cantonment area that was allotted to her after the assassination of President Ziaur Rahman. She was also given another house in Gulshan area for use as a source of income.

Her cantonment house can be termed as a palace. Late President Ziaur Rahman was a legendary man known for honesty in all respects. The house in Gulshan would have been enough with a monthly allowance for his family's survival. But the arrangement was made for Khaleda Zia to enable her family to lead a lavish life. Anyway, after she became

prime minister and her sons managed to be wealthy persons, she should have come forward voluntarily and returned the cantonment house to the state.

But what the AL government is doing to throw her in hot water for her comments on the role of the government in the BDR tragedy is a political game and this has created an opportunity for the BNP to make it a political issue. The government has issued a notice asking Khaleda Zia to leave the cantonment house within 15 days and she, through lawyers, asked the government to revoke the notice within 5 days. The BNP, along with other issues that cause sufferings to the people, will, most probably resort to street protests. That means the same story of blockade, hartal, killing, torching of vehicles etc. will be repeated, causing untold sufferings to common people and hindering all welfare activities of the state.

For the general people, the only way is to pray to the Almighty to help this nation.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque

Khalishpur, Khulna

Too defensive!

Precaution is needed for our welfare but if it stops the speed of life, then of course this is not expected. In case of facing the threat of global recession, most of the companies (working in Bangladesh) are doing the same thing. They have been so defensive that already they have stopped new recruitment totally. Moreover, they are cutting jobs of temporary employees on different lame excuses. Recently, the government declared (informally) in the same manner that less efficient ten percent employees will have to say 'good-bye' to their jobs very soon.

I personally believe that the companies are being more vigilant than the real situation demands. In Bangladesh there is very little possibility of a great impact of the recession. Because you know, our economy is not credit based like the western ones.

Moreover, Bangladesh produces goods (garments and others) for the consumers who belong to middle or lower income groups. So, the effects will not be so severe that our companies will be unable to survive.

In case of a government declaration, there is a reason to be anxious. Because in the government owned organisations it is very difficult to trace out the inefficient workers. On the other hand, the workers are involved in politics. Always they play a significant role of leader or strong supporters of empowered leaders in the organisation.

Is it possible for the authorities to kick them out? If you try to do so, finally the organisation may collapse. My request to all the parties concerned: please don't be so self-protective. Try to make the hands active and run the organisations smoothly.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Business Administration
Shahjalal University, Sylhet

Creative method

Of late, they have introduced a new question pattern--namely, the "creative method"--at the primary and secondary levels in the schools across the country. One may wonder what was wrong with the previous system. Are we to assume that all the people who attended schools and came out of its doors were groomed in a system that was rotten to the core?

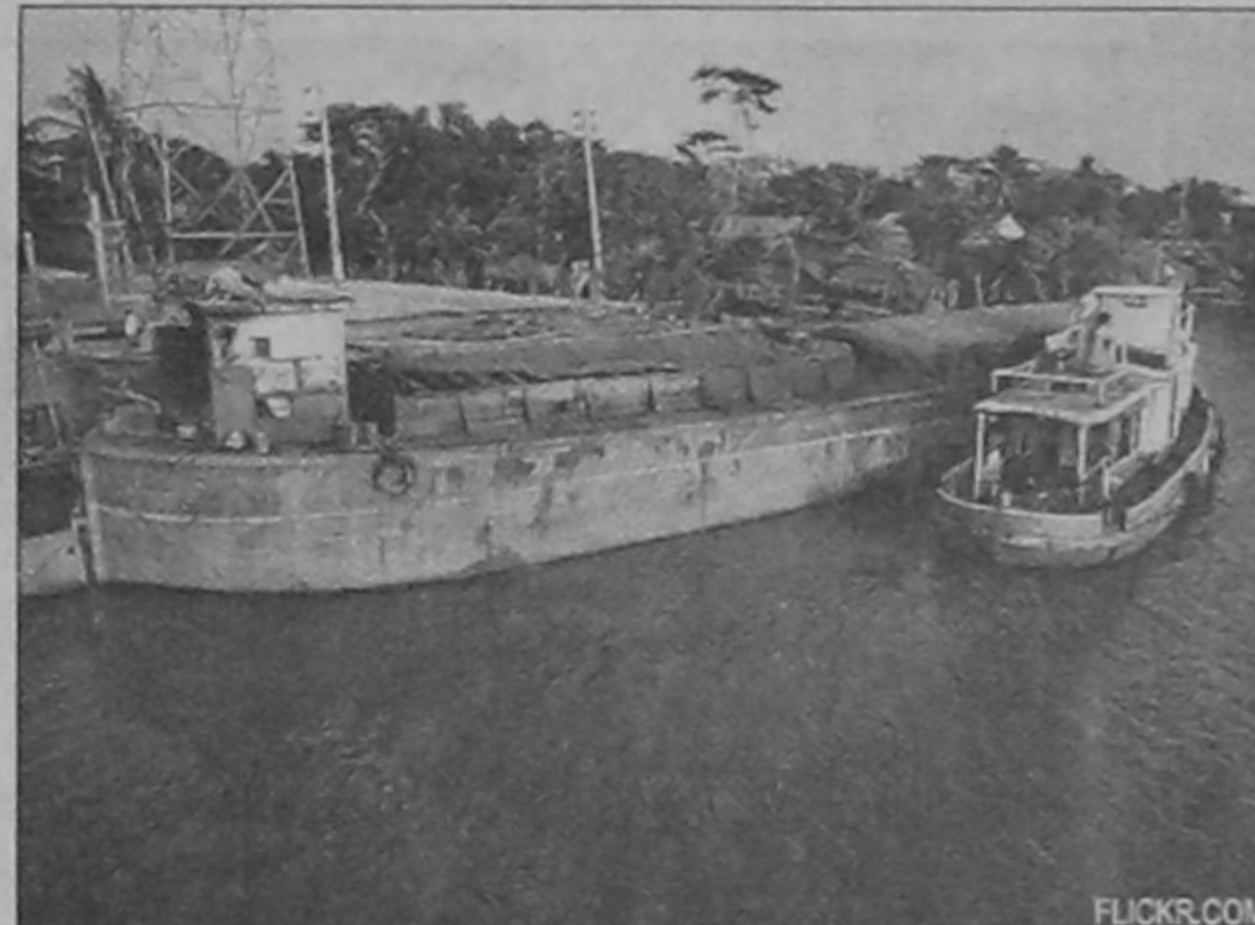
In the past we saw the introduction of different methodologies--essay type questions, short questions, objective type questions and so on. Whatever the patterns of question, we saw a perpetual dominance of guidebooks and

coaching centres--- the teachers and students going through the ritual of rote learning. As a good result in the public examination was the target of this culture, the young learners went for shortcuts like guidebooks, suggestions and so on.

It is imperative that the textbooks meant for the school going students be made more attractive. The peddlers of guidebooks have already come up with solutions of model questions. This unholy alliance of the money mongers--dealers of guidebooks and coaching-wallahs--should be broken.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

Mongla Port



Mongla Seaport is situated in the south-western part of Bangladesh. The previous name of this port was Chalna Port. During the Pakistan period this was an ideal anchorage port & due to its location near the jute mills in Khulna, it was the busiest port handling jute & jute goods. But after liberation due to sinking of various kinds of vessels the port's navigability has been affected, as the wreckage of vessels at the port could not be removed.

Now due to poor & shallow navigability, though a few feeder vessels are calling on the port, foreign owners of the vessels are too scared about their feeder vessels running aground at or around the port. With the change of government, a commitment was made to purchase a permanent dredger for Mongla Port authorities for carrying out regular dredging.

But nothing has been done so far.

I hope that a master plan for improvement of Mongla Port will be adopted & accordingly foreign consultants will be appointed to prepare a long term plan to use this port, so that before the completion of "The Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project" it will be able to increase its draught & the channels, berthing facilities etc for smooth operation.

Syed Shahid Hossain
HR Bhaban, Kakrail
Dhaka

Equity vs. equality

As I was travelling towards Uttara from Press Club by bus, I observed that the conductor picked some passengers, both male and female, from Mohakhali.

Among them, one young girl (appeared to be a student) claimed a seat out of the three seats reserved for women and the disabled, which was occupied by a gentleman. But he refused to give up the seat and pointed her to another common seat which was occupied by a woman with her near ones. But the girl became angry and argued to have the reserved seat.

On the other hand, one gentleman offered his seat, but she politely refused his offer. Instantly, a person

(probably a student) from the backseats said that there were many ways to honour women, but it was not the right approach.

No one should get extra advantage only for his or her sexual identity, the provision of reserved seats in bus doesn't honour the women, rather it undermines them, it equates women with the disabled. Everyone should come up through competition in a civil society, it is matter of "Equity not Equality."

Perhaps most of the people in the bus couldn't distinguish between Equity and Equality.

Alamgir Sajaet
Regional Sales Manager
Mutual Food Products Ltd.
Topkhana Road
Segunbagicha
Dhaka

Climate change issues

Bangladesh has three great rivers the Brahmaputra, the Padma and the Meghna around 230 smaller rivers flow into these. As there are so many people living in the country, they have to use every bit of land available for farming, even the riverbanks. These riverbanks are prone to erosion and people frequently plunge into extreme poverty when they lose their

land and homes due to erosion. Although floods are an annual event, huge floods seem to be becoming more frequent. In 2004, a deluge destroyed 80% of the country's crops, killed 747 people and left 30 million homeless or stranded. The floods of 2007 were not as severe but caused far greater health problems such as cholera and diarrhoea than has been seen for at

least a decade. Temperature increase caused by climate change will mean that more snow will melt in the Himalayas each summer. This water will run into the rivers increasing the chances of flooding and river erosion. If the snow melts fully, it could lead to severe water shortage.

The country could also receive 14% more rainfall by 2028, meaning more land will be flooded. Many of those living in coastal areas will have to move inland where the population is already high. Increased sea levels mean that salt is getting into the soil, making fields near the coast useless for farming. The salt is also killing off mangrove forests that are a vital protection against cyclones, storms and tsunamis. Climate change could also increase the number and intensity of tropical storms in the area.

Predictions suggest that climate change could mean that by 2050, 15 million people may be made environmental refugees in Bangladesh. Comprehensive flood control and emergency measures must be taken immediately.

Mohammad Rajja
Gono Bishwabidyalay
Savar, Dhaka

