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Education in disarray

While presiding over the convocation at Jahangirnagar University, the Honourable President very rightly expressed his concern at the declining educational standards of our universities. It is high time our intellectuals took up serious and realistic measures to correct this sorry state of higher education. Of course, student politics, patronised and actively encouraged by all our political parties, is a major reason behind this state of affairs. Political parties must rectify their relationship, in the overall national interest of better education standards for higher education in Bangladesh.

Not that this should mean that teachers lower the standard of examinations, so that most students can easily pass it and secure high marks! This is the easy way out, but it actually harms the cause of

education much more. More tutorials, closer monitoring of subjects being taught and regular surprise tests, with proportionate marks carried over to the final result, may help matters. Also class attendance needs to be strictly monitored.

It is unfortunate that the high standards that we were used to in the mid 1950s have all gone. Many departments of studies in the university have sadly deteriorated, and attending classes regularly is no longer a compulsion. The government should take up the matter seriously, to see that the standard of education is uplifted, for which all necessary steps in the right direction should be taken, in national interest.

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

DU classroom!

Dhaka University, needless to say, is still regarded as the biggest, most prestigious and best university of the country. So, it's natural that this historical institution would have the most facilities and amenities in terms of infrastructure and other elements necessary for maintaining proper educational environment. But what I saw the other day makes me wonder if it is indeed the topmost university of the country. That morning seeing a number of students huddling even almost outside the door of a classroom, I thought may be something entertaining was going on at that rush hour. But I was utterly shocked to know that in fact it was just a regular literature class of the 1st year, 2nd semester students of the Department of English. The whole classroom was swarming with more than hundred students and those who weren't lucky enough to grab a seat on the bench or at least a place to stand inside the room were forced to stand and huddle outside trying to listen to the lecture, as if they were in a public meeting. When it's hard to concentrate even inside the closed classrooms with continuous noise from the vehicles, buzzing of the passing students and uproar from the 'indispensable' processions, how could one concentrate under such a situation, I don't know. In fact, it's not the problem of the English Department only, many other departments are suffering from the same problem of accommodation which greatly hampers the proper environment for learning and teaching. I therefore urge the authorities concerned to look into this matter and address the issue immediately.

A Rahman Shibly
Applied Linguistics and ELT
Department of English
University of Dhaka

danger to themselves, their families, friends and, indeed, the public. They need to be put into units from which they are not free to walk out and not free to reject help. However, they need the care of those with the professional and personal skills that can sometimes discover the right therapy, often involving drugs. The result of this is that some mental health sufferers can re-join normal society. Needless to say, the cost is great but, if the misery of serious mental illness can be alleviated, then it is surely a sign of a civilized society that it decides the cost is worthwhile.

Those who know what it is like to try and help someone with, for example, paranoid schizophrenia, know how desperate is the need for such places. I am not surprised that some families have taken to tying up such sufferers - or even worse to get away from the intolerable stress of seeing a loved one 'out of their mind', not knowing what to do about it but compelled to watch over them every hour of every day, unable to lead a normal life that responds to their own needs and the needs of other members of their family.

Of course there is the danger of abuse in secure psychiatric units hence the need for careful legislation and supervision. It is possible nowadays, by the misuse of drug therapy, to turn all such patients into 'zombies'. In many countries it is usually the middle and upper class families of sufferers who have pioneered the treatment of mental illness and thus provided a stimulus for the government health sector.

Angela Robinson
Gulshan, Dhaka

Fifth Amendment

Now the Fifth Amendment will be considered illegal and our constitution will regain its original spirit with the installation of Democracy, Socialism, Secularism, and Bengali Nationalism. Through 5th amendment president Ziaur Rahman legalised the illegal and unconstitutional rule of Khondokar Moshaque, Justice Sayem and his own military rule from 1975 to 1979.

The Attorney General has expressed his hope that with the abolition of the 5th amendment the door of military takeover will be shut down forever in our country. But I think without strong political leadership and mutual understanding among our political parties, it will be difficult to have uninterrupted democracy.

Nuruddin Mohammad
Burhan
Dept of Political Science
University of Dhaka

US anti-missile plan

Recently, the USA announced that they have a plan to set up defensive missile systems in Gulf Arab countries to halt possible strikes by Iran. I suppose this is a new political ploy to ensure presence of Americans in the region.

The Arab countries should not respond to the new US plan.
Md. Abdul Wahab
BBA
Independent University,
Bangladesh (IUB)

Supreme Court verdict

There is no doubt that in the constitutional history of Bangladesh, the verdict of the Hon'ble Supreme Court would be written in golden letters. This is such a historical event which can only be compared with the golden days of our independence.

However, it is not understood why the 5th amendment of our constitution alone is illegal, why not the 7th amendment? We all know that by the 7th amendment, General Ershad tried to legalise all his activities done under his Martial Law. I believe that there should not be any double standards.

I would request the legal experts of our country to please come forward and give their valuable comments on this vital issue of national interest.

Hafeezul Alam
A former civil servant

Our national sport

The thought provoking article entitled "Kabaddi or Karma" by Mr. Mohammed Badrul Ahsan that appeared in The Daily Star on the 1st of January 2010 has really given us food for thought. The article gives us a wonderful

view on how different countries have come up with a game as their National Sport which symbolizes their nature and suits their country's outfit. Our whole nation had their hands wide open for a Gold Medal in Kabaddi at the 2010 SAF Games. But the loss of the pinnacle has really forced the whole nation to scratch their head in shame. It is high time to think whether our National Sport really represents the mass population. For a National Sport to succeed throughout, it must be followed by the youth with passion and should be played all over the country with lot of interest. But in case of our national sport, Kabaddi, it is not followed at all and the question of practicing by the mass is far away. As such, we can always think of eliminating Kabaddi as our national sport and may think of declaring swimming as our national sport. Without touching the satirical part of the socio-political issues raised in the article by the writer, I am only concentrating on the national sports part.

Bangladesh Swimming Federation should take an initiative in this regard so that the game can be declared as our national sport. I would like to conclude by naming the ace Bengali swimmer, Brojen Das, whose crossing of the English Channel is still fresh in the minds of people.

Zahid A. Choudhury
Dhaka Cantonment
Dhaka

Passive smoking

Addiction to different narcotics and drugs has become an usual lifestyle of the modern youth. Starting from curiosity it takes them to the

verge of destruction of their youthful life. Be they educated or uneducated, when they have the craze for addiction, none can prevent them from becoming addicts.

Those exposed to passive smoking are in danger. So, smokers must not be allowed to smoke in front of non-smokers.

Ahsan Uddin Tohel
Department of English
Shahjalal University of Science
and Technology
Sylhet

Stop this violence

Student politics hardly does any good to the students - this is again proved as a promising student of DU had to lose his life during the clashes between the two groups of the Bangladesh Chattra League.

There is no way to console the parents who have lost their son. And the politicians appear to be totally nonchalant! This kind of violence and killing must come to an end.

Mohammad Zia-ul-Haque
English department
International Islamic
University Ctg.

Zia's mortal remains

The talk about Ziaur Rahman's dead body in national parliament is so much unwanted and disgusting. Such a talk seems not to show any respect to a departed soul. We must know that he was the president and a freedom fighter who lived his life in a very simple manner, not like a modern day politician. Whether the box contained Zia's body or not was determined by a competent authority and he was buried after a big janaza.

I don't know why parliament should deal with such issues.
Hafiz Chandan
China



Death of a student

The gruesome, cold-blooded murder of a Dhaka University student is condemnable. The dastardly act is a grim pointer to the entrenchment of student politics across the country. There is absolutely no place for violence and extremism in a democracy.

Our security personnel stake their lives to capture and eliminate criminals.

They put in tremendous efforts to enforce law and order, as a result of which they live in constant threat virtually without any support from anywhere. On the other hand, the captured criminals, including terrorists, are kept safe and healthy in our jails. Very few are punished. We are reluctant to act even after the judiciary sentences some of them to death.

Are we not making a mockery of democracy by taking more pains to support and sustain criminals than those who fight to eliminate them? The reluctance to punish the guilty has eroded people's faith in the criminal justice system.

Gopal Sengupta
McGill University, Canada

Business syndicate

Very often whenever there is a price hike of any item of daily necessity or an industrial raw material, a group of manipulators, popularly known as "syndicate" surfaces. Hoarders, monopolistic importers and retailers in collusion with each other create an artificial shortage making the shop-shelves empty and then charge the price at their will. Sometimes this gamble is short-lived and sometimes it continues for a considerable time. Whatever may be the life of the manipulation, the members make a brisk business of over profit at the cost of the poor consumers. In Bangladesh, there is hardly any powerful instrument which is able to catch hold of the syndicate.

For the last few days there is lot of news and views on the sudden price hike of a very important industrial raw material called "cotton yarn". All of a sudden, there has been a tremendous shortage of yarn and price of the item has increased more

than Tk. 25.00 to Tk. 30.00 per kg. The resultant shortage and sudden price hike made the garment exporters (RMG), the main forex earner of the country, lose competitiveness. They are now switching over to China and other sources instead of local fabrics.

Due to increase of prices and shortage of yarn many local weavers, especially the manufacturers of export quality fabrics, have closed down their weaving units because the RMG units are unable to pay them more to maintain their competitiveness with their foreign buyers. The spinners are big investors and are in full control of the government agencies. They convince the government not to allow import of yarn and maintain their supremacy on the weavers. The ultimate results are against the national interest because the RMG units opt for import at lesser prices from foreign countries.

I think the government should look into the matter.
Shafiqul Islam, NY

Mental health

The Daily Star has published some good articles on mental health over the last few months. You have shown your readers how important it is to overcome ignorance and prejudice, fear and denial concerning mental health problems and have highlighted the need for suitable institutions, with properly trained specialists and carers - for voluntary patients.

However, I have not read anything yet concerning one of the most challenging aspects of this issue: the need for secure psychiatric units for those whose mental illness is so severe and their refusal to accept treatment is so persistent that they are a

ing licence. This should be stopped, else more Hamims will die due to reckless driving.
Tarek

It is the cops who take money and let this type of vehicles ply with untrained drivers. Who will take the responsibility of this death?
Msa

I seriously condemn situations like this and put the responsibility on the government. Why? Because unless road discipline is maintained, the bus drivers are never going to restrain themselves and more such accidents will take place.
Mobasher

It is awfully heart rending to look at the hapless father. When will the conscience of our government be stirred up? I must put the blame on those people who are in charge of ensuring people's safety.
Mohiuddin Rasel

Most of the bus drivers in Dhaka city are carrying fake licence. They have no training and they do not know the traffic rules. Bus conductors often drive these vehicles. Traffic police don't take prompt action against them.
Sultanul Nahian Hasnat

No room for new vehicles
Vehicles already 7 times the road capacity (February 7, 2010)

This is quite good news. I am sure none of us knew this, not

even the road transport authorities. How does one explain this sheer inefficiency and negligence?
Shahzad Uddin

Correct analysis. I visited Dhaka a few months back and was surprised to see that private vehicles had pushed the taxi trade out of business. Important roads in the city were full of private vehicles. Do not increase the number of vehicles!
I was quite concerned with the pollution situation in the city of which I became a temporary victim.
Faqrul

That's fine-- 180 vehicle hit the roads every day. But the authorities do not say how many are getting OFF every day? So far no vehicle got scrapped! That's one of the most troubling causes behind the crisis! Non-motorised vehicles cannot be allowed to run together with motorised ones on the same road!
Saleh-Rahim Ahmed

It shows that people are getting richer, so they are able to buy more vehicles. But our city is not getting bigger!
Mamun

Please remove rickshaws and mini/micro buses! And do not tell me rickshaws are essential; NO other city in the WORLD has them, so why do we need them?
Antik

The government should stop giving car registrations and upgrade the railway department

to introduce train service from downtown to suburban areas.
Muhammad Imtiaz

Thank you very much for this story on our traffic mess. I only hope that the authorities concerned will now address this serious problem in all sincerity and do something to reduce the problem in a month's time.
M.M. Rahman

What the government can do is to pursue schools to introduce mandatory school transport, which may reduce a lot of traffic.
Ratna Juliana Chowdhury

The politicians are able to talk loud but can't be welfare oriented for people.
Kabir

Who will dare to say that this is a poor country?? This is shocking that our GOVT management system is so poor with no future plans. Sorry, I must say, they have plans but no implementation.
Chintito

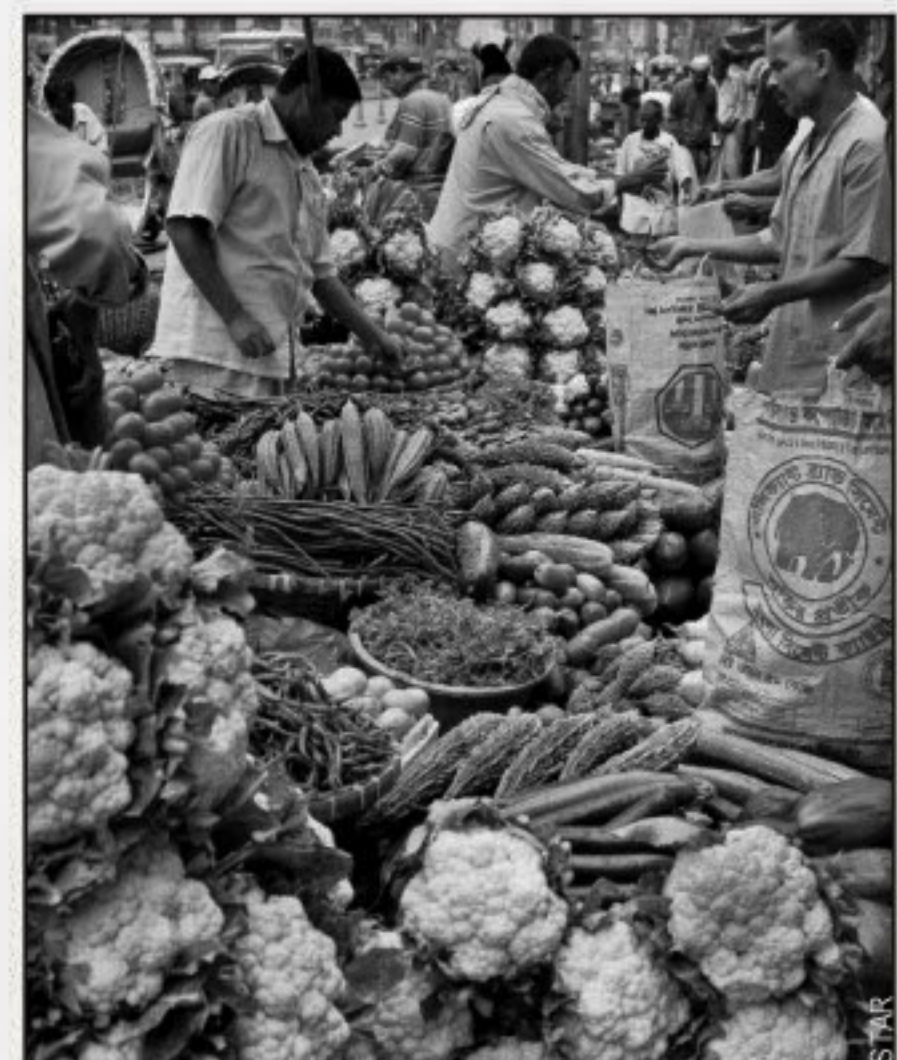
Around 40% of the total area of a capital should be allocated for road, but Dhaka! The government should do something about it.
Bahar Biswas

The politicians can only talk loud in the name of democracy, but had no contribution to development of the country. Dhaka was rapidly developed during Ershad's regime. Then only two new roads after 1990!! Can you believe this?
Asif

Vegetables

Vegetables are one of the essential food items for growth and maintenance of health. In the months of December through March, vegetables are available all over Bangladesh. But during the rest of the year frequently people confront tremendous shortage of vegetables. Bangladesh is predominantly an agricultural country with rich soil condition and climate. Numerous types of vegetables could also be grown here from April to November. It is matter of regret that, even after four decades of independence, we could not produce enough vegetables for the countrymen. The issue needs better handling by the departments concerned.

Md. Ashraf Hossain
Middle Bashabo, Dhaka



ONLINE VOICES

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Menace bus

If a driver hits a pedestrian he may not know the extent of the damage, as he is often too callous and cowardly to stop and find out.
That is precisely what happened when bus driver Shamsur Rahman killed a five-year-old boy in the capital yesterday. (February 4, 2010)

My son and daughter are almost same age and feel very bad about this accident. It could happen to my child. Police should be very strict in enforcing traffic rules.
S.M. Abdul Haque

This does not surprise me a single bit. Do we realise what we have become? Should we not do some soul searching why do buses have no side mirror? Why do they pick up passengers from any point? Why do our passengers jump into a moving bus? Why is the bus driver nonchalant about the whole episode?
Shahzad Uddin

Streets of Dhaka are a pedestrian's nightmare. Safe crosswalks are virtually non-existent, sidewalks are taken over by the vendors. We need tougher vehicular homicide laws and exemplary punishment to stop these reckless drivers.
Rana

The traffic police are too busy catching motorcyclists and

private car drivers to collect... Bus drivers are never caught. Vehicles outside Dhaka ply the road for years without registration. Power tillers are turned into deadly vehicles. All this happens under the nose of the DMP!
Rabiul Alam

This is a truly shocking incident, however I would like to highlight the fact that there is an overbridge in proximity to the school gate which people do not use. This behaviour is also partly responsible for such tragic accidents.
Shadab

I don't know how many more innocent lives have to be sacrificed before our law enforcement authorities realize the situation and take corrective steps. I am a father of a school going daughter and I don't know which one is essential - to send her to school or to keep her safe (out of the reach of the buses).
Imtiaz Anwar Sajal

Because of corruption, these drivers can manage 'fake' driv-

said her client was hanged for non-violently protesting against the voting fraud. "An executions with this speed and rush has only one explanation," she said. "The government is trying to prevent the expansion of current opposition movement through the spread of fear and intimidation."

So far, this tactic does not appear to be working. Messages circulated on the Internet have called for fresh rallies on Feb. 11, when the regime celebrates the Islamic Revolution.
Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Clash at DU

We are deeply shocked to see the news of the death of DU student Abu Bakar on 3rd February. Abu Bakar Siddique, a third year Islamic History student, died in Dhaka Medical College Hospital at around 9:30am. He was injured during clashes between two BCL groups. From the online newspapers we got to know that he was a meritorious student studying hard and soul to become first so that he could be a DU teacher. We have lost this boy.

One group is claiming that he was not active in politics, another group is claiming that he was a BCL activist and their supporter. The Honourable VC termed it very unfortunate.

I would like to request the leaders of the BCL to visit the home of Abu Bakar and meet his family. Just imagine what a disaster it has been for the family!
Md. Maidul Islam
An engineer
Working at a multinational