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Schools, not prisons



It came through that today's education a highly competitive and lucrative business where schools compete to produce impressive results by creating an atmosphere of exam frenzy through the year and resorting to corporal punishment of sinister dimensions is driving students even to suicide. Narrations in the Enquiry by children and parents of inhuman incidents of violence and humiliation were heart-rending. What seems to embolden the school authorities to convert schools into prisons seems to be the fact that many parents are in tune with such punishment regimen; they are not against physical violence as a tool for disciplining, but only against excesses. And teachers fear that their job security depends on the performance of students.

Corporal punishment as an acceptable part of schooling is deeply entrenched in the Indian social psyche. In a globalised market, education has become a mere skill and even a pretension of perceiving it as value-based knowledge does not seem to exist. It is

obvious that the education department, the school managements and the police are notably failing in their duty to the children.

A human rights perspective is to be introduced in teacher training; there was the case of a school principal 'inviting' the local police officer to counsel the students that ended up in a horrendous bashing up of many students. As sexual exploitation of girls by teachers was also considered in the Enquiry, one of the proposals was that the current stringent requirements to prove rape should be relaxed in cases involving minors. The grim and tear-stained faces of parents and children at the Enquiry reminded one of the words of Nobel Peace Winner Gabriella Mistral of Chile, our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life... Many of the things we need can wait, the child cannot. To him we cannot answer, tomorrow. His name is today." The travesty of schooling by terror should end.

Gopal Sengupta
Canada

groups is guaranteed (no matter what is the official religion of the country, or what words are used for preamble). To effect such equality, criminal laws (if it is not there already) must be brought in to prevent discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, physical disadvantage, etc and for incitement of hatred on any such basis. Prevention of such discrimination is the true meaning of 'secularity' in the constitutional and legal context. Laws to prevent such discrimination exist in all secular western countries, although they have a national church, or religion, or religious preambles to any prescribed laws. The word 'secular' is not used in their written or unwritten constitutions as it is superfluous.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Demise of Dhaka
The article "Historic Dhaka city: Past glory and present crisis" by Md Mashur Rahman Mishu suggests by all means that Dhaka is dying.

It is understood that he is a student at BUET and all that he has written is not from experience but from history given his tender age.

Everything or a being has a life span, so does a city. We, human beings, live around on an average 60-70 years. Our prime time is usually between 20 and 40 years, then decline begins. Our hair begins to turn grey, wrinkles begin to appear on skins, firm muscles and bones turn fragile and so on. In modern times to hide all these aging signs we adopt various means like dyeing hair, applying wrinkle vanishing lotions etc in futile efforts to appear young. When the time comes we have to bid good-bye to this mortal world leaving everything behind.

Similarly, Dhaka was at its prime in the 60's, those born in the 40's and 50's may agree with me without any prejudice. It is very much evident in the black and white movies and songs made in those times. Like human beings, Dhaka began its downfall from the 70's and it is still continuing. All signs of decaying, as we human beings experience, are apparent with Dhaka. It shall require dyeing, polishing and so on to appear as a vibrant city. Then one day everything shall come to an end. Being the capital of Bangladesh, demise of Dhaka means demise of Bangladesh. Just look around, you shall find the truth yourself, it is out there.

Saleh Ayub
One-mail

one-way sign boards are gone, parking on the road is rife and things are back to 'normal'.

It is now quite a job getting in/out of Niketon as Road No 2 resembles a paddy field rather than a road. Rickshaws, cycles, motorcycle riders are being thrown on the boulders and suffering great injuries. There is no sign when the work will resume, if at all. More than a month has passed and all our hopes have been dashed to the ground. Why have we been forsaken? Can anyone in authority explain?

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Humanity in our times
August 6th and August 9th mark the anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II. We might have expected that such expressions of man's inhumanity to man ultimately might have conferred upon our societies the wisdom to truly value life and liberty.

Unfortunately, in the years following World War II, after the collapse of Nazism, the West voluntarily succumbed to a new dictatorship of relativism that is no less evil than the fascism that preceded it. We have seen the contemporary results - the nihilistic yet impeccably democratic legislation that repudiates life itself! I am thinking here of existing, enacted and pending articles of legislation that legalize various drugs, prostitution, contraception, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, abortion, euthanasia, and genetic manipulation.

Today, the West cries for liberation from the tyranny of Modernity being imposed by liberal governments as they seek new and ingenious ways of undermining morality and embracing nihilism. Is this the path western civilization wishes to traverse? Are we to remain self-exiled victims of our own life-repudiating self-absorption?

Paul Kokoski
Hamilton, Ontario
Canada

Muktagachha palace

My friends and I made a plan to visit the ancient places of Bangladesh. A few months ago we went to Mymensingh. We went to see Mymensingh Agricultural University and other beautiful places in the city. We also went to the river Brahmaputra. Finally, we went to see the Muktagachha royal palace which is a treasure of Bangladesh. It is an aged witness of history. When we walked inside the castle it was like we were entering the ancient world. One would start thinking that once upon a time people walked around here, there were king, queen and royal personnel, a whole different piece of world. The palace is really magnificent. Apart

from the living places for king and queen, the palace consists of an in-house bungalow, a round stage for entertainers, a weather house, a jail for the convicts, a secret locker for keeping treasures and many other things. Many old temples are there around the palace. Some temples were built by the Hindu kings centuries ago.

The treasure is there, but we are not preserving it. This palace is now in a sordid condition. There is doubt if anything would ever be done by the authorities to save this precious palace from destruction.

Cantara Wali Ruhi
MBA student, DU



RMG wage increase

Post government decision to increase wages by 80%, we are observing quite a few economists, intellectuals stating that even this is not enough & it should be Tk 5000 minimum.. Workers' demonstration, I can understand, given their lack of education, plus not to mention some politicians' & NGOs' instigation... but hearing such comments from the country's elite group really puzzles me... Has anyone of them analysed (from a finance point of view & not just social)... what is the implication of this huge wage increase to the industry?

Working in this sector for the last 14 years with a renowned organisation & having good client base (by which I mean, who pay decent gmt price), I really like to give public the true situation we are in... 1st of all, most garment makers in Bangladesh, practically work on CM basis (i.e. we charge only for Cut & Making), even if the term of selling is FOB or C&F... This means, for an export of say US\$100, raw materials (fabric plus other accessories) comprises of US\$ 75-80 ... Since Bangladesh backward linkage is very poor, so these fund goes back to the foreign suppliers... The local owners' pie is only 20% of export value.. Garment sector being a labour intensive industry (unlike some other industry such as pharmacy etc), labour cost alone takes up 80% of this CM value.. (i.e 16% of export value)... So now, when this field's (labor) cost is increased exponentially by 70-80%, at one go.. what does it leave for the owner? I really urge our financial experts to analyse this..

We also hear quite frequently, the owners are buying Lexus & other cars. For some one who does 20 million dollar biz even with 1% profit, you can afford these luxury cars... so just having a car should not reflect the profitability/loss of the company... With the amount of stress running this biz, particularly dealing with this frequent worker unrest etc, & the profit margin squeezing to bare minimum, I won't to be surprised, if the current generation entrepreneurs (mostly 2nd generation) opt out of this trade & move to other areas (such as real estate etc, where involvement of labour is minimum)... which some are already doing... Then what will happen to our mass workers?

Mehroz Jalil
Dhaka cantt
Dhaka

Khondoker Rezwan Tanvir
Dept. of Business Administration
SUST, Sylhet

Myanmar's ambition

Our south-east neighbour Myanmar is a mysterious country whose military junta has turned this once well-off country into a poor and separate nation. Neglecting the other world, its junta has been managing to hold the power for decades breaking all democratic norms, albeit it gets patronage from China, Russia and even India. These countries are wooing the Myanmar's junta for getting only economic profits.

Last year, Myanmar tried to install some machinery in our marine territory for extracting oil, gas etc. They also pushed their Rohingya people into our land some decades ago. The problem is still unresolved. They even do not recognize these Rohingyas as their citizens, they are trying to press a label upon these poor Muslims (maximum) as 'Bangladeshi'.

The recent reports disclose that Myanmar with the help of North Korea (another evil country) is trying to acquire nuclear power. It is a very bad news for us.

Rashid Harun
Dhaka

ADB, or WB where the interest rate on similar loan could be obtained at 0.25% with no fees added where the Indian loan has an interest rate of 1.75% with an initiation fee of 0.5%. It has to be paid within 25 years, and has a penalty of 2% per year thereafter. As per Mr. M. K. Anwar, the loans from the international banks do not have any such penalty. The fact is, all loans from ADB or WB are based on LIBOR rate, plus an add-on fee. The LIBOR rate is a composite interest rate on a basket of bonds. The current WB lending rate is 6-month LIBOR + a fee of minimum of 2.00%. On the top of this lending rate, there is a one-time fee of 1% of the loan amount. For the loan amount \$1 billion, the one-time fee will be \$10 million. If the loan needs to be renewed after its original maturity, there is a renewal fee of 0.5%. In a recent loan from the ADB for fixing natural gas distribution problem, the government of Bangladesh obtained a loan of \$266 million at an interest rate of LIBOR rate + 0.60%, plus a commitment fee of 0.15%. For the current loan amount of such a large size (\$1 billion), the add-on could be much higher than 2.00% that the WB charges on normal size loans. The point is, it is wrong and misleading to claim that the lending rates on loans from international banks, such as ADB and WB are lower than the interest rate secured in the Indian loan.

Mahmud Hassan, Ph.D
New Jersey, USA

Police atrocities

I am horrified to see the police atrocities in dealing with the students in Dhaka and Chittagong, who were protesting against hike of tuition fees and imposition of VAT on their tuition fees in private universities. The students' demands were in connection with higher education, some of which the government has already accepted. But it is astounding to see how heavily the police came down on the students in both cities. The students were not criminals, neither were they demanding any illegal things. So, the way police treated them with their truncheons is not acceptable.

The government may not be supportive of all their demands, yet ruthlessly beating the young students is not acceptable. Police should be more careful in handling the young generation.

Ahmed Munir
Purana Paltan
Dhaka

Constitution and secularity

The word 'secular' has many meanings to many persons. To insert such a word in the constitution of any nation is really a meaningless lip service and a perennial bone of contention and agitation. What is required is a positive assertion in the constitution to the effect that 'equality before the law' for all citizens including minority and disadvantaged

PSC exams

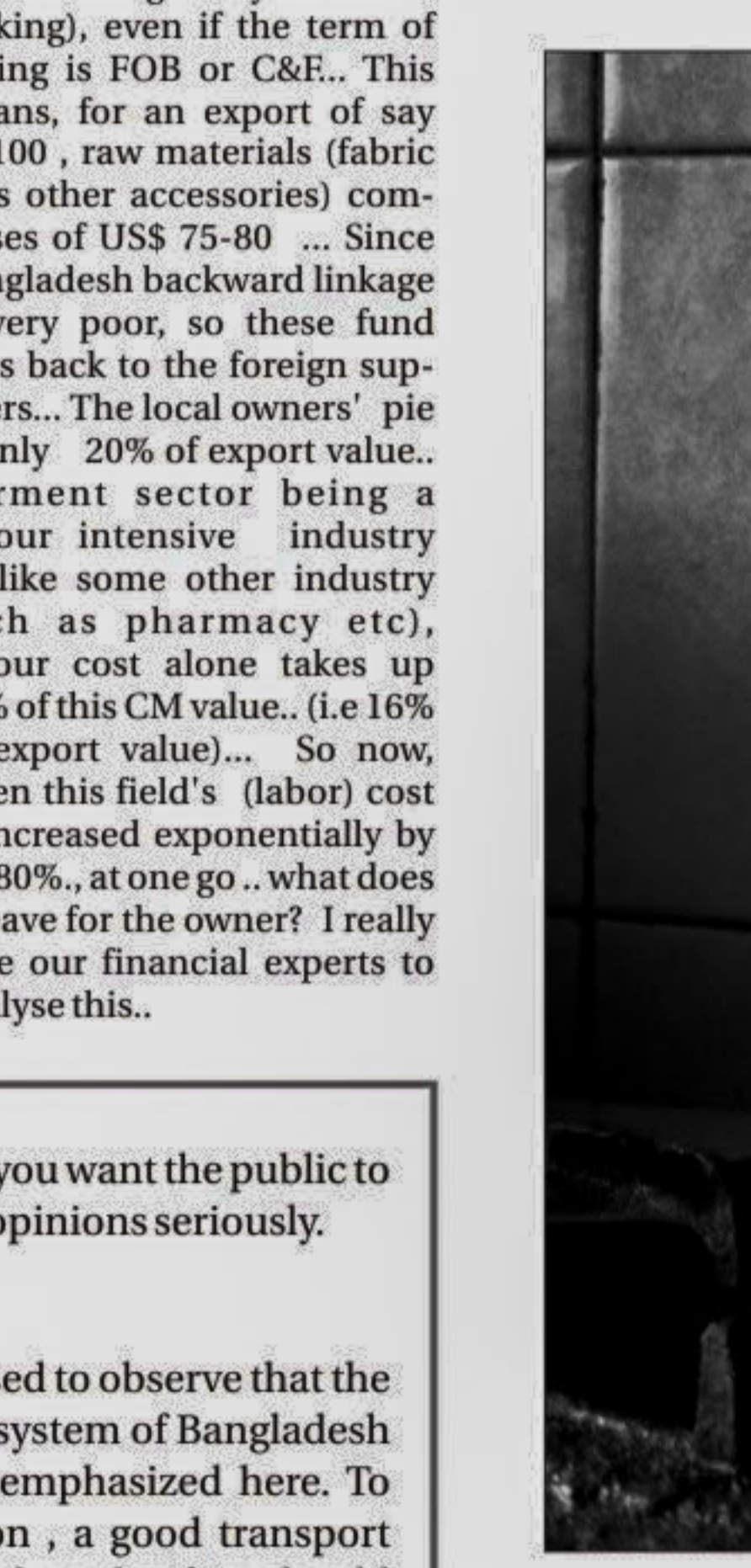
After hearing all the clamour about the gross errors in this year's preliminary questions, I sat down to answer them myself and was shocked. Many questions in the Bangla, General Knowledge, Science and Math sections did not have the correct answers among all the four given alternatives. In one of the sets the instructions and the questions were all mixed up, confusing the examinees and preventing them even from attempting to answer, as there was negative marking for wrong answers.

When I was younger, at one time I used to set the question for the Everyday Science section of the PSC Examination and I did it for fun for many years. There were no complaints. I gave up when they asked me to see 400 scripts as part of my responsibility as a question-setter, with the regal honorarium of Tk.2 per script.

I can assure everybody that there is absolutely no way the government press could be made responsible for the serious errors in the questions this year and I can say with certainty that there is no way of rectifying the consequences of these errors. The exam HAS to be retaken.

Dr Ahmed Shafee
Physics Department
University of Dhaka

A simple technology



I guess at least 30% gas is being wasted, especially in our houses and restaurants. People keep the burners on even when it is not necessary. I have seen in many houses that even educated housewives keep the burners turned on for hours to save one matchstick. A similar thing happens in restaurants.

Several years back in a science fair a college student showed us a gas burner which turned on when there was something (such as a pot containing water with rice) on it and the burner turned off automatically when the pot was removed. This is a very simple technology. Our policymakers were present at the fair but they did not pay any attention to that invention. If they would make it compulsory to use such kind of burner, a huge amount of gas would be saved. I would request our policymakers to look into the matter.

Dr. M. Mahboob Hossain
Associate Professor
Microbiology Program
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BRAC University

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\$1b credit line to Dhaka

Bangladesh, India sign deal; Delhi has agreed on transit for Bangladesh to Nepal, Bhutan: Pranab (August 8, 2010)

You said about the donors' loan and they impose different conditions while issuing such loans. I want to know is this loan condition-free?

I, as a Bangladeshi, do want good relationship with India. Tell them to stop killing innocent people on the borders, to stop occupying our lands. Relationship will be better than before. We don't need their money.

Riyad

The visit gives fresh impetus to realizing the vision of Bangladesh as a regional hub. The soft loan deal is historic for both the countries. But India must also prepare to finance the development of world-class roads and highways in Bangladesh as transit would bring heavy pressure on our infrastructure. Not to say that our existing highways can't take such a load.

Umran

It is the big time for Bangladesh to use money properly, loaned or donated.

Baz

I hope Bangladesh will utilise the money in the stipulated projects quickly.

Niloufar Sarker

Congratulations, Minister Mukherjee. Thanks goodness, Indo-Bangladesh special relationship should commence with far reaching changes and breaking the heinous rocky ice orchestrated by backward forces. I believe economic benefits of much needed investment in key sectors are simply enormous and Bangladesh should join in the train of sustained regional development.

M.O.Gani

A new chapter has been opened. Relationship with India is different from relationship with all other countries & vice versa. But India never remembers the fact. Hope this time India will under-

stand the importance of Bangladesh as a good neighbouring country. Relationship in equal terms is expected from India. Otherwise, friendliness will evaporate like anything.

Selim

I wonder why those forums/associations for Bangladesh Economics refrain from making an analysis of the 1 billion dollar loan contract with India [whereby the 85% surely returns to India by way of buying whatever is needed to implement those projects. It means, India won 2 billion dollars in total through this contract.]

--Why FBCCI, DCCI, MCCI, BGMEA, BFUJ, BIDS etc will not opt to analyse various parts of the said contract even out of academic interests, let alone informing the people through press conference, educating the economics students etc.!!

Badal

Message to the BNP: join par-

liament if you want the public to take your opinions seriously.

SKhan

I feel pleased to observe that the transport system of Bangladesh has been emphasized here. To my opinion, a good transport system and road-safety should be the first and foremost matter to get attention.

Kishore

While allocating money the government must ensure that they give priority to development, not defence. This is the message, which I wish to convey.

Rawshan Ara

My question is, do we really need to take this loan from India as these projects are not as much required by Bangladesh as by India? So why are we paying the price for Indian interest?

Rahim