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## Higher education

Higher education in Bangladesh is fragmented, scattered, and takes place in nearly 1200 institutions called affiliated colleges, many of which are tiny and a trace better than higher secondary schools. They do not have libraries worth the name. Most of them have a faculty strength varying from 100 to 200 and the number of faculty with doctoral qualification is pitifully low or nil in many cases. These institutions of higher learning perform only classroom teaching, preparing students for examinations like tutorial colleges. Unfortunately,



the entire higher education in Bangladesh takes place only in the ill-equipped, understaffed, affiliated colleges as can be seen from the fact that 89 per cent of undergraduate students, 66 per cent of post-graduate students, and 82 per cent of faculty are in the affiliated colleges.

We have the peculiar situation of substantial post-graduate education in colleges that have no research whatsoever. Only nine per cent of research scholars are in the affiliated colleges. Can anyone knowledgeable in higher education understand, much less accept, post-graduate education leading to MSc, MA, MPhil, and even PhD degrees in institutions that have no sanction for professorial positions, no research scholars, and no semblance of any research, much less basic research? But this academic wonder is happening in Bangladesh growing strong, multiplying and unchecked. Consequently, it is not only our undergraduate education but also a substantial part of our post-graduate education that is poor in quality.

We may adopt the following steps to augment the number of university-level institutions.

The government must set up, in a planned way, more colleges not universities. There must be encouragement to establish private universities with adequate safeguards to ensure quality and healthy management. Many deserving colleges must be granted university status; many good colleges must be given autonomy. In the case of colleges that do not qualify to become deemed universities or autonomous colleges by 2021, a ten-year scheme must be prepared to transform them into junior colleges offering job-oriented diploma programmes. The affiliating system must cease to exist after 2021. The government must, in all seriousness, draw up a plan and programme of action, allot the necessary funds under the mission "Reconstruction of Higher Education," and implement it in two successive five-year plans.

Gopal Sengupta  
McGill University, Canada

## Assault on OC

Officer in Charge of Sharsa Police Station was physically assaulted by a member of parliament allegedly for starting a murder case against some of his party supporters. I as a retired police officer feel hurt and anguished and demand exemplary punishment, of course after due inquiry. As per CrPC, the OC is the symbol of civilian authority. Even in the colonial period when OC was a non-gazetted officer Union Jack (flag of the British Empire) was hoisted in his office. That tradition still continues. As per Police Regulation of Bengal, OC had a place in presentation line when governor general visited his area. In present day police administration, OC plays the pivotal role. Assault on OC is an assault on whole judicial system because criminal justice system starts with the lodging of complaint with the OC. In suggesting punishment to the perpetrators, I shall also suggest departmental proceedings against OC and accompanying staff on charge of cowardice. The police officers who cannot keep the honour of his uniform should not be allowed to wear it.

M. Sanaul Haq  
Retired Inspector General of Police  
Uttara, Dhaka

German equipment, they buy cheap Chinese or Indian equipment which does not give any service.

Whenever multiple aircraft is on the ground at HSA, Biman is unable to provide enough hi-loaders to off-load the cargo and baggage from the aircraft which leads to delay and that is very costly for any airline.

At departure time, often Biman is unable to provide push-carts to pushback the aircraft which leads to further delay.

I would like to urge the government to seriously look into the matter and solve this problem.

Aminur Rahim  
New DOHS, Dhaka

## BCL

The Bangladesh Chhatra League is now out of Awami League's control. We are keen to know what is going on in this organisation. If the AL fails to control BCL, they would be detached from the general people of Bangladesh.

BCL is continuing their unruly activities in all the university campuses. It would bring bad luck for AL.

Rowshan Ali  
Student  
A private university

## Unrest in RMG

The new wage structure declared by the government has infuriated the RMG workers. Everyone knows that with a minimum salary of Tk 3000 per month, a worker can hardly make both ends meet, let alone other activities. But we will also have to be aware of the fact that it is an 80 percent increase from the previous salary structure. I believe our government could have handled the situation more prudently through maintaining communication with both workers and owners. Owners have to take workers in confidence that they are trying their level best to meet their (workers') rational demands. At the same time workers have to be

patient. The government should not allow any evil force to instigate the workers to indulge in vandalism in the name of movement. Any kind of unrest in RMG sector is an ominous sign for our economy. Healthy environment for production is a crying need if we want to compete in global market.

Zubair Ahmed  
Department of English  
University of Chittagong

## Closure of schools

The government's decision of shutting down all the schools with a view to lessening the never-ending traffic congestion, came too hurriedly for the teachers to provide their students with holiday homework, let alone advancing the syllabus a bit to ease the load both teachers and students will face before the annual exam. What is more, JSC (Junior School Certificate) exam of class Eight is scheduled to be held for the first time in November. Having the experience of teaching, I know how difficult it is to complete the courses in time unless classes are held as it should be. So the decision is shortsighted. Consequently, the reliance on private coaching increased by degrees, compelling the guardians to expense more than necessary.

Why education has to be made scapegoat for the failure of agencies responsible for dealing with and finding solutions to traffic jam menace is not comprehensible. With the whole world focusing mainly on the promulgation of education sector we are compromising it, proving ourselves inefficient time and again. It goes without saying that if a problem remains unsettled for a long time it can definitely spread its horns wreaking havoc to its surroundings. The same thing happened here. But closure of academic institutions is no solution to traffic jam. Rather, this petty solution to traffic jam will create problems in our already-sick education

system. Regrettably enough, we are allowing a disease of one limb to infect other limbs without finding a way out to get rid of it!

Sarwar Hussain  
Dept. of Computer Science & Engg  
University of Chittagong

## Poor rickshaw pullers

It has become difficult to roam around in the sun for a long time without an umbrella. The days of walking on the boulevard are over. One would feel the skin burns. The weather is intolerable.

Just think about the poor rickshaw pullers. They have to stay in the sun all day whether they like it or not. The rickshaws don't have hoods for the pullers. Some try to wear gamchha like turban but it doesn't work.

I think this can be solved if the hood is extended so that the passenger as well as the puller can get advantage of it.

The umbrella companies can produce small umbrellas, especially for the rickshaw pullers, at an affordable price, which can be carried by tying it with one's head with belts. The industrialists can voluntarily donate such umbrellas to the rickshaw pullers.

It's time we do something to minimise the sufferings of the less privileged ones.

Cantara Wali  
University of Dhaka

## Rule of law!

We, the people of Bangladesh, are living with our misfortune. But the situation should have been different. In the electoral pledge the AL promised to establish rule of law. The utterance of this sentence is now a cruel joke for us. The law and order situation is deteriorating without any pause since the grand alliance assumed power. The latest addendum of their stigmatised achievement is the assault on cops. Where is the end of it?

Shamsul Alam Johnny  
One-mail

## Mass transit now!

I congratulate the writer of this well researched Point Counterpoint article published on Aug 17. The suggestion to shift the main railway terminal to Tongi is an excellent one coupled with the provision of frequent commuter trains between Tongi and Narayanganj. However to prevent traffic barriers it is necessary to construct a sky train mass transit system for commuter trains. This can be built on the existing roads on elevated pillars and completed much more quickly and without much disruption of traffic flow or services, and at a fraction of the cost of an underground system to carry passengers on this route.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed  
London, UK

## Bus seats for senior citizens

I would like to thank the bus owners association and concerned advocacy groups who have ventured to keep at least nine seats in each bus reserved for the handicapped, children and women.

This practice has benefited the female passengers a lot, no doubt, even though it is still observed that some male passengers try to defy the rule. However, we hope people will gradually accept it and maintain it respectfully.

One more thing should be given importance. Many old people are seen standing in buses which is ignored by many strong and healthy passengers who are occupying seats.

Would the authorities concerned take some steps to mitigate the sufferings of old passengers of the buses by reserving a few seats for them?

M. Rukanuddin  
Dhaka

## Tony Blair in Bangladesh

Both Bush and Blair lied to the world and to their countrymen and triggered an invasion of mass murder and annihilation of human beings unprecedented in the history of mankind. Does anybody has any statistics of how many children and women and innocent human beings were slaughtered indiscriminately in Iraq due to a barbaric and unjust war thrust on the country illegally by the above two persons, besides destruction of homesteads and properties? The figure is enormous.

Those two persons are seemed to be totally oblivious of the crime they committed against humanity. We are waiting for the time when these two persons will face the war crime tribunal for their misdeeds against humanity. We do not know what business has brought Blair to our country where he is most unwelcome. Only business as we read in the newspaper was to meet the foreign minister to attend a dinner and meet the prime minister. He could be a VIP to our ministers but certainly not to the people of this country. We are peace-loving people and hate war and its perpetrators.

Mohammad Ataul Hoque  
One-mail

## Performance of AL govt

The current situation of our country has made our life miserable. It seems that everything is falling apart.

Scarcity of electricity, water, and gas has become acute. In addition, traffic jam has reached such a point that people cannot do the regular activities of their lives.

It is a matter of great regret that the ruling party men are



JASHIM SALAM / DRINKNEWS

## The holy month

Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) said, "Fasting is a shield."

Fasting not only purifies the mind, but also the body. It is scientifically proven to be much healthier.

Man learns to control his hunger, thirst and bodily desires and devote much time praying to Allah. Children learn self-control from fasting, which is beneficial for their personality development.

This month is a period of intense devotion, seeking guidance and forgiveness from Allah, which brings us closer to the blessed guidance of the Holy Quran, which was revealed in this sacred month.

It also awakens compassion and

solidarity with others, in particular with the needy and poor. We are urged to be more liberal in giving.

Although Ramadan appears to be a hard and difficult month, it is in fact an enjoyable time. A special atmosphere prevails in homes, mosques and Muslim communities as a whole around the world. So, Muslims look forward to the coming of Ramadan with great expectation and feel certain sadness when the month ends.

The month of Ramadan gives us the opportunity to develop qualities of endurance and self-restraint, to control anger and the fiery, malicious tongue.

Mohammad Shahidul Islam  
Freelance travel journalist

## Taliban and Pakistan

To get Western aid, Pakistan must stop propping up Afghan Taliban in its proxy war with India.

After the disclosure by the WikiLeaks about Pakistan powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) providing sanctuary and support to the Afghan Taliban, Lahore's Daily Times editorialised on July 28: "So the real issue is the ISI and its links with the Afghan Taliban. ... Gen. Musharraf played a dual game with the Americans by handing over al Qaeda members while giving protection and rear base areas to the Afghan Taliban. That same policy is continuing under Gen. Kayani, the only difference being that the local Taliban are being hunted down but the Afghan Taliban are being protected for a post-withdrawal Afghanistan. Now that these documents are out in the open for all to see, voices in the US have already started to emerge and will get louder with each passing day about Pakistan biting the hand that feeds it, in fact chewing it off till the elbow."

Pakistan is trying to prop up the Afghan Taliban in the name of gaining what it considers a "strategic depth" in its proxy war with India. As a result, the Afghan Taliban are slaughtering American and Canadian troops, using Pakistan's tribal areas as their staging posts in the same way Pakistan-based Afghan Mujahedin slaughtered the Soviet forces earlier. You cannot expect the United States, Canada and other NATO countries to open up their hearts to Pakistan's suffering when it is involved in a game endangering the lives of their soldiers and civilians. Last week, the Afghan Taliban murdered in cold blood 10 Western health workers affiliated with the International Assistance Mission, a Christian charity.

As Prof. Jorge Heine, chair at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, University of Waterloo, recently wrote in the Toronto Star: "As long as Pakistan backs a movement of this kind, it is unlikely to generate much sympathy." To regain Western sympathy, Pakistan must stop propping up the Afghan Taliban in its proxy war against India. Instead of hurting India, it is hurting U.S. and Canadian troops fighting the Taliban.

Mahmood Elahi  
Ottawa, Canada

## Believe it or not

People the world over must have seen many unnatural things on Television in Ripley's Believe It or Not. I have deliberately chosen the title as the phenomenon I am about to mention is almost unbelievable. I do not belong to any party, nor am I a partisan.

Believe it or not, Kalabagan, Bashiruddin Road, experienced power failures six times in less than 6 hours between 6.30 and 10.30 pm in one night. The people of the area must have extreme patience or else they would have come out in protest against such erratic power supply. Thanks to digitisation of Bangladesh.

I wish there was a time machine and I could travel back 50 years retaining my present age so as to live my remaining life in peace.

Saleh Ayub  
One-mail

Md. Ataulah Faruki  
Jahangirnagar University

## Population explosion

I would like to thank the four Supreme Court advocates who recently filed a writ petition on public interest on the over population problem of our country. In response to the petition the High Court has issued a ruling on the government regarding this matter.

Population problem is a burning issue of Bangladesh. In 1971, during our liberation war, we had a population of 7.50 crore. At present we have nearly 16 crore people in our tiny country. The density of population is about 1000/km which is one of the highest in the world. If the present growth rate of population (1.39%) continues, there will be 25 crore people by 2020.

The famous economist Malthus in 1798 warned the world against the

worst effect of over-population. He mentioned in his theory that population grows at geometrical progression (i.e. 2, 4, 8, 16 etc) but the production of food increases at mathematical progression (i.e. 2, 4, 6, 8 etc). Actually, the root cause behind almost all problems is over population.

We cannot meet our own demand of food, albeit we are now producing a much higher quantity of crops than that of the past.

China has adopted one child policy and the world now observes its progress with wonder.

So, for our survival we have to decrease our population, we have no other options in this regard.

Rashid Harun  
Dhaka



PHOTO: ANIRUL RAJUI