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Educational institutions

Teaching is a very noble profession and teachers are looked upon with much reverence. We used to think that this profession does not have any hazards, but not anymore, the present situation of our country has made us change our minds. Now-a-days we frequently hear about teachers being harassed by students, they are physically attacked, get confined, verbally abused and so on. The latest incident was reported in The Daily Star on September 28, 2010. It described the brutal attack of Awami League activists on Md. Abu Taher, Principal of Tabalchhari Green Hill College in Matiranga upazila of Khagrachhari district. It was disclosed that the attackers severely beat him and broke his left leg. Since the Awami League formed the government, unrest has erupted in many educational institutions across the country. Bangladesh Chhatra League is clashing among themselves and also attacking Chhatra Dal and Chhatra Shibir. We learned that on September 27, 2010 a group of BCL men stabbed an activist of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal on the campus of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, which left him critically injured. If this is the condition of our educational institutions, then what is the future of the country?

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

MPs and media

Your editorial "Parliamentarians take a dig at media" dated September 23, 2010 seemed to indicate your surprise at the bellicosity of the ruling party MPs towards the media. While I commend your optimism, the reality is that just because of someone is elected does not necessarily make that person a democrat. Lest we forget our own history, the inconvenient truth of the matter is that the current ruling party was the first government in our history to ban all newspapers outright, with the exception of the four controlled by its own organs. One may say that all that happened more than thirty years ago, but keep in mind that some of the very MPs who voted to ban newspapers in 1974 are sitting on the treasury benches in 2010. If they could get away with it without any scrutiny from the outside world, I am pretty sure they would do it again.

Esam Sohail
Wichita, Kansas
USA

Session jam

It is a matter of great regret that owing to session jam students cannot complete their education in right time in Bangladesh. As most of the university students come from poor families, it becomes difficult for the families to bear their educational expenses for the extra years. It takes 7 or 8 years to complete a 4-year honours course! Political clashes, unwarranted closures, irregular class schedules are some of the major causes behind this session jam. The students of

Sending our army to Afghanistan



"Of sending men home from the dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice and love."

--- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

What Martin Luther King said about the consequence of wars is that it can't be repaired, recovered or reconciled by any means. The withdrawal of troops by the Obama administration indicates that they've now somewhat realised the meaning of these words. In war, there is always collateral damage and there always will be. But it seems our government neither knows nor feels this truth. It's obvious to all why the most powerful army in the world is abandoning Afghanistan and Iraq. They want to keep the possession of power over Afghanistan and Iraq, not by their own troops, not by NATO, but by something that is available at low cost, that is, troops from the third world. And

Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Science University, Jagannath University and Rajshahi University are the worst victims of session jam.

The govt. must realize this and take appropriate measures to reduce session jams from the universities on priority basis.

Khondoker Rezwan Tanvir
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology
Sylhet

Border killings

The joint meeting between BDR and BSF, reported in your daily on September 27, seems to have allowed both sides to openly discuss the issue of border killings by BSF. The Director General Srivastava of BSF considers the civilians being killed at the border as "criminals" and that they are being killed inside the "Indian territory". Does he imply therefore that it should be of no concern to Bangladesh? What kind of justification is this for killing civilian trespassers? It should be remembered that it is against international human rights law to kill an unarmed civilian, even if he/she is a smuggler or a criminal, and it holds independently of whichever territory he/she is found when being killed.

It sounds rather absurd that BSF finds "no alternative" but to "open fire" to protect their border from civilian trespassers. Instead of using lethal ammunitions could they not use anaesthetic / plastic projectiles that would make a human trespasser unable to flee?

A mere re-labelling of the killings at the border by the press as "deaths" (as desired by the Director General of BSF) would be a travesty of reality. Instead, Director General Srivastava can, in all probability, do an enormous service both to the bilateral relation between the two neighbours and to the human rights law, by ordering his force to halt the use of sharp ammunitions against the civilian trespassers immediately, or replace them by non-lethal ones (should it be at all necessary) to catch the offenders.

Farhad Faisal
One-mail

BCL and Jubo League

The highly deplorable heinous activities of Chhatra League, Jubo League elements and some ruling party MPs, are continuously shocking us. The recent incidence in Pabna is an eye opener and is a classical

example of criminalisation of politics. Nowadays we find no difference among BCL, Chhatra Dal and notorious NSF. They behave in the same manner. I voted and will continue to vote for the AL, and also influenced many of my friends, relatives to vote for the AL in all the elections. It pains me a lot reading about all the incidences perpetrated by BCL, Jubo League leaders and workers. I would like to narrate a personal sad and shameful experience of mine while in 2nd year in Dhaka Medical College. We got admitted in Dhaka Medical College in 1969. In those days the present BCL was popularly known as Mujibbadi Chhatra League (MCL), and the other was 'Baiganik Chhatra League' (BCL). One afternoon in 1972, my Hindu classmate and roommate was called out from the room and was planned to be beaten up by some of my classmates belonging to MCL for reasons best known to them. I prevented the beating by asking them as to why they want to beat him up. So, naturally I incurred their wrath. The same night our room was knocked after midnight. I opened the door. On opening, I was suddenly and firmly boxed on the nose by one of our classmates. He was fully drunk and was accompanied by seven/eight of our classmates. The majority were dead drunk. Two vomited on the corridor. The boxer classmate of ours brought out a pistol and jabbed the same on my abdomen. They were also verbally abusing me like anything. I was in a near death situation. Our another roommate friend pacified them and saved my life. Such was the conditions prevailing in Dhaka Medical College in those days. In the next election of DMC Student Union, Chhatra Union (Motia) won almost all the seats including VP, GS etc.

On 29th September 2010 around 50 first year students of Dhaka University residing in Shahidullah Hall were ousted from their rooms on the instructions of Shahriar Azam Munna, President of BCL Shahidullah Hall unit for not joining PM's reception and were kept in the open on Curzon Hall premises. Some of them had examinations the next day. Munna also instructed his cadres that the victims couldn't enter their rooms and continue studies for which they got admitted to Dhaka University, not to indulge in student politics. The students were also tortured, humiliated and warned

not to speak to any media person.

The BCL and Jubo League cadres are rendering Awami League government immensely unpopular in a rocket speed. The PM and the all concerned in Awami League ought to take all the nefarious, destructive, image tarnishing, activities into serious cognisance. The election is not very far away and Awami League and its associates will have to go to the people asking for votes. How will they answer the uncomfortable questions? Please, do not take common neutral silent majority people for as fools and as granted. We do not wish the repeat of the past sad inglorious history. If repeated, that will be the end of pro-Liberation forces and probably the beginning of the end of Bangladesh.

Dr. SN Mamoon
One-mail

America's trap

During our PM's recent visit to the USA, the special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan of the US Richard Holbrook gave a proposal to our Foreign Minister Dipu Moni to send some troops to Afghanistan to help the coalition forces there. Undoubtedly, it is an American trap and Bangladesh must not enter such a trap anyway. America is the super power and can attack any country any time without considering the reaction of the world. America has committed a great sin by attacking Iraq and Afghanistan and killing thousands of innocent people there. We do not support the activities of the Taliban in Afghanistan. We strongly believe that their activities are against the spirit of Islam but there is no logic for the B&B gang (Bush, Blair and their accomplices) to send troops there.

Actually, it is America who created Taliban during the Russian war in Afghanistan. When Russia ran away from Afghanistan, there was no importance of Taliban to the USA anymore and the Taliban were turned into enemy overnight. As we are a poor country, the USA has dared to propose this to us. And it is very important to note that America and other countries are returning their forces from Iraq and Afghanistan. It will be a great sin if we go there to kill innocent human beings in the name of combating terrorism.

Rashid Harun
Dhaka

Pabna whipped

Finally the civil administration of Pabna got whipped by the political hierarchy allowing the administration little chance to defend themselves. This unprecedented incident will remain as a big blot for the whole civil administration of the country for long to forget and forgive. Instead of getting justice they got severe thrashing from the policymakers due to political pressure. It is really painful to read that the advisor of the PM, H.T. Imam accused them of crying in front of the civil society and media. By doing this they have violated the code of conduct of the civil administration. My question is don't those people, who are being manhandled and even mercilessly beaten by the political thugs during performing their duties, even have the right to express their sentiment? If this practice keeps continuing in such a manner, people will lose their faith on civil administration, and party politics will take over the whole administration very soon.

Humayun Hyder
Zigatola
Dhaka

BNP smells a rat!

A local English daily's 30th September issue had a front-page headline write-up by their staff reporter. It brought back memories of my rat smelling days during my college life. I prefer to share this with the readers, rather than rats involved in politics and legal matters. I will leave it to our political and legal experts to analyse and dissect. I only wonder what rat did BNP smell? Was it a live or dead rat? If it was a live rat I believe that it could smell like most furry creatures in the wild, tinged with the smell of earth, to which rats burrow in to avoid other animals, and large birds of prey that might dive down, and make a meal of the rat! Dead rats however naturally smell of putrefaction, depending on the interval between the rat's death and its smelling! This smell will be really obnoxious! My experience of dead rats, was related to practical dissection classes in Zoology, way back in 1949-50. We had live rats, killed by waste cotton soaked in chloroform, then cleaned with laboratory spirit and mounted on a wax based dissection tray. Naturally, these freshly killed rats smelt of chloroform, and nothing else. Here too, my knowledge is superficial, since I disliked Zoology.

I hope BNP does not plan to kill any rats, except in the political sense, and hopefully, not by violent means. Politically, the ballot is the best, which is the ammunition for killing in political field. BNP therefore, should have fresh and first hand experience from the last general election.

Non-violent engineer
Dhaka

Why a new airport?

A news report was published in The Daily Star on August 28, 2010 about the government's intention of building a new airport and naming it after Bangabandhu. This is a huge project that requires Tk. 50,000 crore plus.

Spending this huge amount of money for building a new airport doesn't make any sense in a country like Bangladesh, where majority of the people are poverty-stricken. The following things can be done instead of building a new airport:

-- To accommodate more flights and handle passengers, the present terminal building can be expanded all the way to the north up to Uttara and towards the south up to Nikunja. The cargo terminal and the hangers for maintaining the aircrafts can be relocated on the western side of the airport and the VIP terminal can be built near Nikunja.

-- A part of Dhaka Cantonment on the western side of the airport is open for public, the government can easily make new terminal buildings, roads and a second runway there. A new road will be required from Zia Colony intersection to the Ashulia-Uttara Berribandh point as the entry and exit routes to the airport.

In the subcontinent, all the major airports are located inside the city. We can simply go to Mumbai and take a close look at the airport and can decide. This huge amount of money can be utilised by making the required 27% roads in Dhaka city. Making flyovers on the outskirts of Dhaka at all entry/exits points as well as within the city to combat traffic jams should get preference. New power generation units can be built to save the general people from the present power crisis. And many schools, colleges and universities can also be built with the money left after renovating the present airport. We need to spend money in a planned way and for that we have a planning ministry who are supposed to guide the government.

I would request our PM and the authorities concerned to give it a thought before this huge amount of money is spent.

Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmondi
Dhaka

Eye medicines



Bangladesh is a poor country with a huge population. Hence many people do not get adequate food and medicine. People cannot afford costly treatment and medicines. A large number of people are suffering from various types of eye diseases. Eye treatment is very costly, because most of the medicines are imported from abroad. For treatment of "Glaucoma" doctors advise patients to use the medicines Alphagan and Lumigan for their lifetime, as this disease is generally not curable. It has been observed that the prices of the above medicines increased by about 200% by the importers, and retailers are accordingly charging high prices from the patients. This had caused great concern amongst Glaucoma patients in the country. It is feared that the prices will further go up soon.

Bangladesh also imports the medicines doctors generally prescribe for the treatment of other eye diseases, and these are costly in our country. Most of the people cannot afford to use these medicines regularly and thus suffer.

It is therefore suggested that our drug/medicine manufacturers obtain copyright/manufacturing permission from the foreign eye medicine manufacturers and produce all these eye medicines in the country. Once we start manufacturing these medicines, the cost will come down.

These medicines then can be exported to our neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Middle East countries also.

At present we have some reputable medicine manufacturing companies who are producing quality medicines. They should come forward and take necessary initiative regarding this matter. We expect that our health minister would give necessary assistance to the interested local companies for manufacturing these medicines for public interest.

Eye patient
Eskaton Road
Dhaka

Sick condition of hospitals



It is good that National Human Rights Commission has spotlighted the sick condition of Dhaka Medical College Hospital and The Daily Star also gave it due coverage. Will anybody look into the private hospitals? Will anybody tell us what is going on inside those luxurious buildings? Any investigating journalist will find horrifying pictures inside these so-called hospi-

tals. People are suffering from wrong treatments, and some are dying because of ignorance of the so-called consultants!

I am afraid NHRC will not have easy access inside these posh buildings as they had in DMCH.

Dr. Qazi Islam
Shantinagar
Dhaka

Mindless hill cutting



A couple of decades ago, the main attraction of Sylhet was the small hills. Unfortunately, Sylhet is losing its beauty. Those powerful land grabbers are cutting hills for their own benefits. Local people have said police is not doing anything about it. Rather it is an opportunity for them to take bribe from the criminals. The ultimate result of hill cutting will be horrible. Many

people of Chittagong died in mudslides due to hill cutting. May be in future people of Sylhet will face the same fate.

We urge the government to take proper steps to stop hill cutting.

Raju Kumar Das

Shahjalal University of Science & Technology
Sylhet