

## Hiking tuition fees

### Ministry should rethink proposal

WE fail to understand why the ministry of education has suggested that private educational institutions whether under Monthly Pay Order (MPO) scheme or otherwise, may raise school fees up to 30 per cent. This question is particularly relevant since the ministry had asked private schools and colleges not to raise fees in an ad hoc manner last February. Many schools went ahead and raised fees anywhere between 50 to 100 percent in January citing higher “salary” for teachers. And although we have been told that no private educational institution can raise fees beyond the slated 30 percent, our experience shows that the governing bodies of these institutions do what they please without having to answer to any authority.

The second question that has been posed by guardians is what correlation is there between teachers’ salary and the new pay scale for civil servants? Why is the ministry suggesting increase in the tuition fees by a third without taking into account how parents will pay for this massive jump? While salaries have risen for members of the government service, that is not the case for the rest of the people in the economy who belong mostly to the fixed income group.

The circular in itself is not entirely clear. The 30 percent hike in fees will be for how many years is not stated. It is feared that the circular will encourage governing bodies of schools and colleges to do as they please. Any revision of the fees’ structure must be discussed with all stakeholders, as the ministry’s circular stipulates, prior to implementation. While we want the teachers of private institutions to be well paid, the hike in tuition fees must follow a rationale.

## We need all the support

### Our call to foreign friends

WE reiterate the business community’s call to foreign friends and development partners for continued support in our journey to prosperity. The plea comes after a few countries put out a red alert on Bangladesh following the Gulshan café attack despite the heightened efforts of the government and society to crack down on militants.

Our friends have two choices. They can leave and thereby play right into the hands of the extremists, or they can stand by the peace-loving, hard-working people of this country to win the battle against extremism and help them build a country where the common man can realise his aspirations and dreams.

Since the attack, the government and the people at large have taken some commendable measures to combat terrorism and extremism. Last month, law enforcement agencies successfully thwarted a terrorist plot, killing 9 militants. Thousands of students and teachers have marched on the street across the country to denounce extremism. People from all walks of life have made it clear that they do not subscribe to the warped views of a few misguided youths.

We express our thanks to all countries and development partners without whose support and cooperation the significant economic and social strides the country has made since its independence would have been difficult.

Bangladesh is going through a difficult time. We need all the support to overcome it.

## COMMENTS

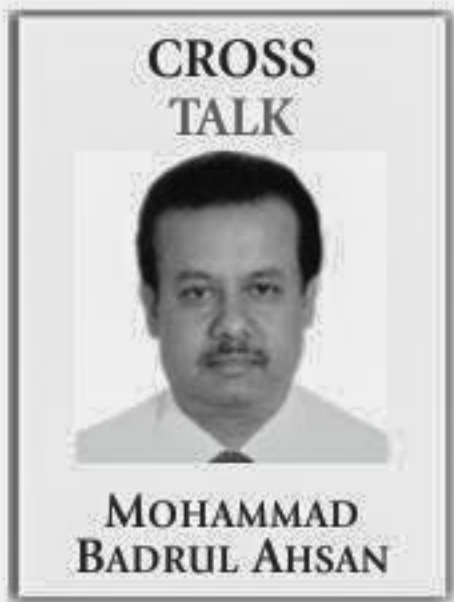
**“British Council to reopen offices soon” (August 8, 2016)**

Ariaan Shishir  
We welcome the decision.

**“2,245 road deaths in seven months” (August 8, 2016)**

Mejbah Uddin  
Have there been proper investigations into the cause of these deaths?

# Where should journalists draw the elusive line?



CROSS  
TALK

MOHAMMAD  
BADRUL AHSAN

OUR Home Minister last Monday rightfully asked journalists not to publish any news that tarnishes Bangladesh’s image or achievements abroad. While it’s the duty and obligation of every patriotic citizen to hurt neither, the question is where should journalists have to draw the line? While publishing only negative or positive stories will read like propaganda rants, hesitation over what to print is likely to turn news into a mushy mess.

The idea of news basically is the presentation of facts. Now what facts can undermine the country’s image or achievements is a matter of questionable essence. In many countries, it is understood that issues of national security must not be divulged without government clearance. In some countries, the governments censor news to control the flow of information.

Our journalists pretty much write about hunky-dory stuff, which, once in a while, may have verged on sensationalism. But what news have they published so far that damaged the country’s reputation in the world? This question is important because getting lost in the wilderness isn’t a problem so long it takes one to the Promised Land.

If they print erroneous reports, they should be held accountable by all means. Only this week we have seen pictures of three handcuffed journalists, who were arrested for publishing news that was nothing but a load of hot air.

But if they print factual news, what can they really write to embarrass the country? They can write about political conspiracies, bank frauds, corruption in the government, economic downturns, sexual scams, and, now, terrorism. How do any of these areas expose the country to inordinate risks of defamation? What can our journalists reveal that the world doesn’t know?

And, what exactly is the reputation of Bangladesh in the outside world? Yes, the world does recognise that a lot of good things are happening in this country. A Nobel laureate ran with the Olympic torch in Rio that must have brought his country’s name to the lips of millions of viewers across the globe. The world also appreciates that we are heading towards the status of a middle-income country. Yes, it knows we are a leading exporter of manpower and garments. Occasionally, a Bangladeshi or two gets recognised in foreign countries for professional or academic excellence.

But all of these highlights are subsumed within the murky picture portrayed by larger perceptions. Bangladesh to the people worldwide is still an overpopulated poverty-stricken country riddled with



PHOTO: THE DAILY BEAST

**Bangladesh to the people worldwide is still an overpopulated poverty-stricken country riddled with corruption and rattled by political turmoil. Now, terrorism has added a new dimension. How much of that can change no matter how many rims of papers are filled by journalists with wishful thinking or misguided motivation?**

corruption and rattled by political turmoil. Now, terrorism has added a new dimension. How much of that can change no matter how many rims of papers are filled by journalists with wishful thinking or misguided motivation?

There is a subtle disagreement over who is behind the terrorist acts and the target killings in Bangladesh? The home minister insists on homegrown terrorism, and he surely does it on behalf of his government. Some

people tend to believe that the Islamic State is behind the atrocities committed in this country. What if some journalists also share that same opinion? Is that going to influence how the world looks at Bangladesh?

Probably not, because that opinion was formed already when the United States and the European Union cried IS for last couple of years. They repeatedly claimed that this militant outfit has its footprints in Bangladesh and even warned of attacks on a large gathering of foreigners. So, how is it going to change anything if the journalists in the country carry some more coal to that colliery?

Journalists in this country most often use foreign sources for news instead of being used by foreigners as their sources. So, it seemed like the minister was squeezing the lemon dry when he asked the journalists to watch out what they write.

In all fairness, it should be the other way around. The journalists should ask the politicians to think before they talk. What they said and how they said it so far have kicked up a storm.

It’s more dignified to fight against odds than being at odds with each other. This is where the standing of a country likens to family honor. Nobody respects a family if its members are fighting tooth and nail.

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## FRIENDS FOREVER



HUMOROUSLY  
YOURS

NAVEED MAHBUB

IT’S the first day of graduate classes at a brand new university, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. It’s a brand new country, the US of A. It’s a brand new

weather pattern – 5 inches of snow with a chill factor of Heaven knows how much. Not to mention the chill factor in my heart. I have cold feet – literally and figuratively.

But I shake hands with the two young men sitting on both my sides. On my right:

“Hello, I’m Erick Alvarado from ‘Em Eye Tee’.”

M.I.T. – Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Gulp!

On my left with a thick accent and a bobbing head:

“I’m Balan Dinesh from ‘Eye Eye Tee’ Kanpur.”

I.I.T. – Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur. Gulp! Gulp!!

But, not to be undone: “I’m Naveed Mahbub from ‘Bee You Eee Tee’.”

That’s B.U.E.T. – Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

Erick: “I get the ‘U’, ‘E’ and ‘T’, but where is Bangladesh?”

Sad. More so, I feel so inferior. There goes our self imagined pride and a thousand layers of hierarchy based on our Alma Maters and degrees within the narrow confines of Bangladesh.

But the complex subsidies within a mere few weeks as the three of us – an Indian, an American and a Bangladeshi pool in our knowledge as we ace every test and assignment. More so, a sense of pride as the I.I.T. guy and the M.I.T.

bloke look up to this B.U.E.T. fellow for every conceivable math solution in our super complex *Stochastic and Random Processes* class. And I recall my B.U.E.T. professor Dr. Matin, “Naveed, if you have the desire to learn, you can learn at Abu Gifari College (with all due respect to the college), and if you don’t want to learn, you will not learn even at M.I.T.”

It is only for one semester that we three

friends and have nothing in common. In fact, we are diametrically opposites of each other in terms of outlook, lifestyle, interests and hobbies. But we are the closest of friends simply because he is crazy enough to run nude in Shahbagh just to win a mere bet and scatter human excrements in a Notre Dame College classroom just to foil an adamant class test on a *hartal* day when every other institution in

manifestation of the brick wall of yester years from whose behind people threw stones at the unaware public. A FOLLOWER then slams you in front of your FRIENDs and other FOLLOWERS which in turn is LIKED by a FRIEND. Hmmm – the beckoning of the UNFRIEND button.

But with all the different dimensions of friendship, we celebrate Friendship Day. As the saying goes, “A friend in need



**It is only for one semester that we three have common classes. But it is these four months that forge a friendship of a lifetime even as the three of us disperse off to the three corners of the world. Friendship can happen anytime, anywhere, at any age and with anybody. Period.**

have common classes. But it is these four months that forge a friendship of a lifetime even as the three of us disperse off to the three corners of the world. Friendship can happen anytime, anywhere, at any age and with anybody. Period.

Of course, there is the friend with whom I never went to the same school or college, didn’t grow up, was not a neighbor of, didn’t have any common

the country remained closed. Opposites attract.

But friendship has added a new dimension. Welcome Facebook. The world now limits FRIENDs to a maximum of 5,000. You then say WHAT’S ON YOUR MIND. A true FRIEND honestly COMMENTS right in your face. But remember, there is a WALL, the digital cover of which gives everybody the courage of Hercules – a digital

is a friend indeed”. I will be happy if you don’t find any need for me as that means you are not in any crisis as I strive to be the bestest of best friends to everyone. But I never can – the bar has been set very, very high by Faraz....

The writer is an engineer at Ford & Qualcomm USA and CEO of IBM & Nokia Siemens Networks Bangladesh turned comedian (by choice), the host of ABC Radio’s Good Morning Bangladesh and the founder of Naveed’s Comedy Club. E-mail: naveed@naveedmahbub.com

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Plight of the pensioners

The present government has been very considerate in the welfare of their employees. During its two consecutive terms, two pay commissions have been formed and their recommendations have been accepted with minor modifications.

The last pay commission formed in 2015 had by and large recommended a pay rise by nearly 100 percent of all categories of government employees which has been accepted and implemented. In conformity with the pay scale, the pay and allowances of the president, prime minister, ministers and MPs have also been increased in

the same proportion.

As an old pensioner, I feel that the formulators of the Pay Commission 2015 have not been so considerate with the pensioners. Instead of recommending 100 percent increase, (as has been done in respect of serving personnel) the pay commission copied the recommendation of the pay commission of 2009. This is: a 50 percent increase in case of pensioners 65 years of age and above, and 40 percent increase in case of pensioners below 65 years of age. It may be noted that the pay commission of 2009

recommended a general rise in the pay scale of the government employees by around 60 percent. It may also be noted that the pensioners don’t get pension uniformly; pension of a person depends on his/her date of joining the pension establishment and the pay scale that existed at that time. There are some pensioners who retired when the Pakistan pay scale was in vogue and the maximum pay of government employees was Tk 2000 (pre-1975 period). For them and also for those who retired under the scales recommended by next one or two pay commissions

(despite routine increases being are ridiculously low) get a meagre amount when compared with the current rate of pension and cost of living.

I am quite aware that the pensioners are a spent-up force and are not in a position to exert any influence. Therefore, it is our hope that our PM and finance minister will take a rational view on the plight of the senior citizens and increase the pensioners’ allowances like the serving government employees.  
Lt. Col. (Retd.) Q. A. F.M.A. Raquib  
Uttara, Dhaka