

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



PHOTO: AFP

Long live Mahathir

Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, an astute statesman of Malaysia, will bid farewell to politics on Oct 31, 03. He was a rational critic of the occidental macho personality. Typically, he is an icon of development and of economic stabilisation. Mahathir has globalised Malaysia as a sound economic powerhouse of Asia. And he has done it very rapidly. Really, we, the people of Asia, are going to lose a dynamic, outspoken and frank leader soon.

Mahathir has been a mouthpiece for the Muslims too. Muslim leaders around the world should follow his path to ensure welfare of their people and their economies. I hope Mahathir will continue counseling the Muslims as their mentor.

Long live Mahathir Mohamad.
Molla Mohammad Shaheen
Dept of English, University of Dhaka

SOS call from students, to DU authority

Dhaka university authorities observed another mourning day for 39 bright students who died more than 18 years ago on October 15, 1985 in the collapse of Jagannath Hall. As the roof of the hall collapsed, students inside died very tragically. Daylong programmes were held in this respect. Mourning procession, placing wreaths at memorial plaque, hoisting black flags, wearing black badges, were significant activities of the day.

If one inquires into why the catastrophe took place, one could find out that the roof collapsed due to lack of maintenance. It is regrettable that we haven't learnt anything from that accident. Recent reporting of The Daily Star revealed that dilapidated ceilings of 50 rooms of Surya Sen Hall are likely to collapse any time. Moreover, the condition of 18 rooms of Fazlul Haque Hall is also in worse condition.

The north block of the hall has already been sealed off after the authorities spotted cracks. Students, teachers and employees have complained about the hazardous condition but no measures were taken so far. In reply, Vice chancellor SMA Faiz advised that residents of the hall should remain careful to

avoid accident. I wonder how the authority could escape from their liability and advise students to be "careful" to avoid accidents. Doesn't it sound ridiculous? What can a sleeping student do if his roof caves in over his body? Will they make us wait for another doom?

Bivuti Tarafder
3rd year, Department of Law, DU

Not only corrupt, shameless too

Vehement protests came from powerful ministers after the publication of the Transparency International (TI) report identifying Bangladesh as the most corrupt nation for the third time in a row. My question is, do we really need TI to tell us how corrupt we have become? TI Report coincided with specific allegation brought against a judge of the highest court of law and we see no compunction of the judge concern to resign.

The Supreme Judicial Council is yet to move on the issue, or is it about who will bell the cat? There are rumours of financial corruption among a number of sitting Supreme Court judges. A retired judge of the Appellate Division was rumoured to be getting patronisation from the very same group that has again come into the limelight with the BOI chief's scandal in the media.

If that has become the status of today's Supreme Court of Bangladesh, then I hardly find any rationale in the separation of the judiciary. I remember many sweet moments I'd spent with late Barrister Ishtiaq Ahmed. In one of those encounters, I found him a little too inclined to let his frustration overtake him. He said, it was a trend that brief less lawyers (in legal jargon, it refers to incapable and inefficient lawyers) joined the bench. Anyone with a close liaison with the Supreme Court would know it better. Now a new blot of "dishonesty" has befallen them.

We also see a person none other than the BOI Chief in a terrible financial mess, receiving payments in lakhs (perhaps kickbacks) and that too in cash, while holding a government office. He goes even further to admit that he gave technical support to his previous employer although his current employer is the government.

We all know what this technical support means in our country's context, although it is a little unfair to target the BOI Chief alone. Almost all the people in power (99.9 percent to be exact), be they politicians, bureaucrats or power brokers, offer similar services to outsiders to earn extra cash. Some call it professional or service fee no matter what you and I call it. It does not even exclude the

highest echelon of the judiciary, as we have learnt from the recent exposure of Barrister Rokonuddin. Some prefer it in cash while others like their ill-gotten money reimbursed in bank accounts in Europe or US.

In a country where the Prime Minister's intervention is needed to stop the dismantling of a perfectly functional road divider while the Minister in charge expresses his ignorance, anything is possible. We're not corrupt only, we've become shameless.

Khandaker R Zaman

Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Patriotism demands sacrifice

People serving in the highest ranks should stop doing illegal things first so that their juniors are forced to give up such practices (Letter to the Editor, The Daily Star, 11th October, 2003 issue). There is, however, a slight problem in doing so. The highest ranking people themselves are ring leaders of the army of corrupt people running our administration.

"All men are equal." This is a common slogan in the United States of America. The cliché comes from a positive point of view. In case of our own country, it is actually from a negative point of view.

Almost all Bangladeshis home and abroad are self-centered. "If

not, they are cowards." This is what people back home say to those like me who live overseas. But no one realises that to act and to take any action, we must unite first. No matter how strong we might feel in terms of wealth, power, and intelligence, there is no point in acting if we can not act together.

Hence, we must initiate the process of group interactions as promptly as possible. This must include interactions between Bangladeshis overseas with those at home. We should also get help from countries like Malaysia or Pakistan who're facing same trouble like us. Malaysia can aid us with technology and Pakistan with military know how. We must withdraw from our dependency on the US and the West. Patriotism can not flourish without sacrifice.

Mustaheed Khan
Tennessee, USA

BOI chief's press briefing backfired

The BOI chief has spilled beans all over by calling a press conference. The entire nation now knows what he did.

The fact that the Press Conference was attended by, among others, a number of students(?) from the JCD and a faction of the ruling party is indicative of his attitude, outlook and political inclination. It also sent an indirect threat to the journalist community at large and the two Editors in particular.

It is not understandable as to why a senior executive of the government should maintain blatant "political" links and summon political supporters to a personal-level press conference. Did he expect attacks from the media that exposed the story?

As an ordinary middle class citizen of the country, yet having dealt with the bureaucracy at large over a period of two decades, I fail to understand how the concerned individual has been able to amass such a large sum of money (Tk.1.25 corers). He needs to explain now, as it has become an issue of public interest.

The accusation made by him about his residential address being "divulged" by the news report is ridiculous, to say the least. Since he is holding a public office, and a senior position too, anybody could have provided the address. After all, he is not the head of any of our Intelligence agencies to deserve a complete secrecy of his whereabouts.

It is not also understood as to why Mr. Rahman refused to divulge the name of the Editor whom he said to have helped with medical expenses. This carries yet another indirect sign of his guilty conscience; that he bribes people to play power. On the other hand, even if he had helped an individual on compassionate ground, it has nothing to do with the journalistic community as a whole.

Reference has also been drawn to an Italian investor, and to Mr. Rahman's involvement in providing "special" services, though things are not too clear as to what really happened. Any intelligent reader is bound to see through the remarks between lines. After all, his recognition of the individual (whose name he refused to disclose) raises a host of unanswered questions.

As far as the publication of the news report is concerned, I feel that it was ill timed. The CPA delegates were still in the country and the story will have influenced them not to speak good of us. The image of the country had tarnished and Mr. Rahman himself is responsible for that due to his negation to convince the concerned newspapers to deal with the story after the foreign guests had left the country. I am certain he made no such efforts whatsoever.

Shamsher Chowdhury, Dhaka

UN, reform it or remove it

This is in connection with the views expressed by Mr. Azad Miah (Oct 6) from Oldham, UK, about the United Nations, whether it should exist, and if yes, what for. Now it is clear that the UNO, with its present form and authority, is virtually useless for majority of the world nations.

It should be there and as the most powerful entity in the world in all respect. But the question is, how? As pointed out by Mr. Azad Miah, the UN is now virtually serving a few nations who have veto power. To be more specific, it is the US and her allies, Britain and Israel, that receive UN services when needed to fulfil their oppressive political agenda.

The recent two wars led by the USA in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the complete failure of the UN to do anything to save the interest of those two weak nations against the aggression of the powerful ones, are the examples that all other nations of the world must seriously take into consideration while planning to ensure their very existence as sovereign states.

This is especially true for the Muslim countries against whom the only super power of the world is now openly and directly using forces of military, diplomacy, media and all other available means to keep them under direct control. This is imperialism a nouveau.

Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries of the world having the

highest concentration of population per square mile. We do not have any valuable natural resources except hardy manpower. The gas reserve that we have is not even enough to meet our own domestic demand.

But the big powers are already after it and probably they will leave no stone unturned to have our gas exported to India where they'd invested in gas-dependent ventures. If Iraq could be attacked for holding the second biggest oil reserve in the world, Bangladesh too might be attacked similarly if we do not listen to the USA and export our gas. These are the unforgettable facts that the Muslim world now, along with others, should deeply think about and come forward to do something about.

It is true that time is running out. But there is no doubt that the UN should be there. But it must be made effective as well as powerful enough to prevent war and generate prosperity. In this connection, the following suggestions may be worthy of consideration.

Shift the UN headquarters to a neutral country like the Switzerland. UN should develop military capability of if its own to challenge any military power in any country that threatens to breach peace.

Do away with veto power or to distribute it throughout the world according to democratic principle i.e. depending on population of the five continents.

All WMD shall be gradually brought under direct UN control and

destroyed. UN must ensure universal disarmament to remove fears of non-weapon states. Otherwise, all small nations will seek suitable deterrence to fend off attacks from the mightier ones.

Meanwhile, the Muslim world should learn something from Mr. Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia who has succeeded in making Malaysia an enviable economic power in 20 years time.

Md. Aminul Hoque
East Rampura, Dhaka

Getting connected with the Grameen

Since May, 2003, I have been using a Citycell line. For the first few months, every thing went well. I didn't face any difficulties to reach other companies' mobiles. I was happy.

But for the last few months, it has become very difficult to connect any grameen subscriber. One has to try at least for half an hour to get connected. Often even half an hour is not enough. Maybe it totally depends on your luck. Most of the Citycell subscribers are complaining the same. Would the Citycell authority clarify what is going wrong between them and the Grameen?

Lali
On e-mail

'Sense and Sensibility' in our life

Jane Austen is not yet out of date in the 21st century. The titles of her two great novels, Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice, have etched into our memories the basic weakness of human nature in any society, independent of time. These failings are more exposed in social personalities out to render public service. The current models are the political personalities dominating world and national affairs, and creating havoc with their ego-led policies for solution of humanitarian problems.

These four basic qualities of the head and heart immediately classify a public figure, seen through the output of their choices in decision-making on behalf of the masses. In many cases, the results of these policies on the nations concerned have been disastrous, as recorded in history. One leader may affect millions of lives, hence the indirect responsibility is heavy.

That is the game of life, at the micro level, in the cosmic universe. We have a very small playing field to manoeuvre during our very brief existence on Earth. The politicians in power exert power through stage puppet show for one term after the general elections. But politicians too do change, what a pity.

Apply Jane Austen in Dhaka metropolis. The predictions analysed in the novels astonishingly ring true to life through the centuries. Like semiconductors, the heart of computers, humans have in-built impurities which a lifetime laundry service can remove. It is a benign preoccupation to try to come back to the right path at the end of the day during this limited life span. Man seeking peace



with whom? Not with the followers! The Creator props up in the inner recesses of the background to haunt the living transgressed souls in solitude.

Most leaders need filter kits to refine their moral sensitivities, to remove pride and prejudice, and to look at the followers with benevolent equality. Improvements are required both in the message (ideologies) and the medium (party channels). Some branch channels are clogged up (as in the DCC zone); and some are flooded with excessive negative zeal (armed terror tactics, toll collection, grabbing tendencies and what not).

Looking at the diagram, it seems like a negative parabola, which has dipped too much from the zero referee point. The curve has to go up into the positive sector of the graph paper (above zero). The oscillations would continue, as life is dynamic (like the constantly changing weather). The governors (as in mechanical appliances) have to control these large oscillations and damp the same within controllable limits, through feedback mechanism and regulatory processes (compare the launch capsize).

The tussle is between two extremities: enhance the social benefits, or subdue the personal and subjective hammering of the inflated ego.

Personalities tend to seek a place in history. The foothold is slippery and the footprint stained. The posterity is harsh and public memory lingers.

A cyclone has an eye or centre. After the event, the equaliser effect prevails. Peace is a leveller. Today's politics is hostile and confrontational, relying on military force against the weaker aggrieved. The forecasts are foreboding, and the mood of the times is to catch at floating straws. A leader cannot lead in suspended animation!

Be on the side of the people, and be protected by the cushioning effect of this huge mass. The latter are gentle and forgiving and side with the virtues which money cannot buy and time cannot erase.

Jane Austen left a four-pronged message: sense, sensibility, pride and prejudice have to be cultivated in harmonious doses to be in tune with the environment, human and otherwise. But today, the sense and sensibility are warped; pride and prejudice inflated. The service providers have to be neutral as local cultures have multi-faced effects. A citizen has the right to some individuality, otherwise we all would be automatons. Variety is the spice of life, but the standardised definition has to be well edited before it goes for universal application.

A Mawaz
Dhaka, On-mail



Why did Cancun summit fail?

Poor countries went to Cancun with high hopes that after years of suffering from economic-racism by rich countries, they would finally get something for their citizens. Unfortunately, some powerful people had other ideas. For years we have witnessed these trade summits where rich countries go and make headlines announcing they would give this or that to the poor countries. This year however, it was different.

Poor countries were no longer happy with some showing-off, headline-grabbing and selfish concessions from the big bullies. They wanted something real, something that would make real impact on the lives of their poor citizens. Sadly, that was the main problem. Rich countries realised that their time-wasting, give-nothing diplomacy will no longer work. So what did they do? They just walked out!

At Cancun, rich countries had run out of their deceitful options. They either had to give what the poor wanted or they had to say no. But saying no would expose their real

evil face to the world. They will face condemnation or even boycotts. So they tried their usual clever techniques to bargain the poor into submission. But that didn't work.

Finally, they did what they always do; abuse their power! They have the power to do whatever serves them best and no one can stop them. These people talk a lot about peace, justice, fairness and they use all sorts of deceptions to make us believe that they really care. But when pressed against the wall with real issues, they always run.

That is one thing all cowards have in common. You can say that Cancun failed because of this and that and you can perhaps write some impressive essays explaining why it failed. But the root cause of its failure is that, some people think they have more rights than others. It is as simple as that.

Azad Miah
Oldham, UK



PHOTO: AFP