

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.

Choice of headline

I, like many of our friends and acquaintances, am appalled at the choice of words (and language) in your newspaper. Let me not waste our time but come right to the point. "Saifur's wife dies"? Is that how you address a person's demise? The fact that she had her own identity apart from being the wife of a respectable citizen of Bangladesh is irrelevant. One pays respect to the departed soul no matter what her/his position was in this world. Would you, Mr Editor, God forbid, approve of the same heading had it been your name instead of "Saifur"? I bet not.

Mahabeen Khan

House 54, Apt 203 Road 84 Gulshan, Dhaka.

Politicians use citizens as footballs

"Doctors get jobs at political behest" was the first lead of The Daily Star (22.10.03). Report says more than half of 600 doctors, teachers, and other staffs have been recruited recently at BSMU violating rules and bypassing university syndicate decisions. I am surprised and shocked.

But I think this is not an isolated incident. Two years ago, when the BNP government came, they freed more than 6000 criminals by claiming the cases against them were instituted on political grounds. What an evil use of politics! It seems one can do everything in this country using political power.

However, I would like to thank Mr. Sharier for the cartoon. It was just perfect. Now, what should the common people say to those doctors? Should we say that they are the BNP-Jamat health team and deserve to be treated well? It is regrettable that we, the common people, are more like a football and the

always costly, because the whole mass is involved, and the latter have no authority to take any corrective action. And this action has to pass through a feedback; which could be time-consuming in every underdeveloped countries. The other reason for delays is the centralisation of authority.

That is why 'democracy', like a magic wand, is much preached here to get into doing things in a better way.

During the last ten years the world witnessed scenes of excesses in the CIS, the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq, all of which had shaken our faith in political philosophies and the concept of sovereignty.

The European civilisation is on the decline. The same seems the case with respect to the East, includ-

Before a stronger police force is built



Recently, the home ministry sought Tk 803 crore from the finance ministry to modernise the police administration (The Daily Star, October 19). It's a timely move by the home ministry because the weak and corrupt police force of our country is failing to tackle the deteriorating law and order situation.

Expanding and equipping the entire police force with modern arms cannot be the main means in curbing increasing number of crime in our country. The government should ensure the implementation of the following first:

(a) The recruitment process of police force must be free and fair, because, outsider's intervention in recruiting under-qualified personnel is a common phenomenon.

(b) The Government should give a chance to the police force to work independently, because, always they are used as tools of the government to fulfil their own political agenda.

(c) Assurance of economic and social security for the force is a must to get maximum output from the police force.

Only then we can expect a skilled, active and corrupt-free police force.

Md Abdus Salam

LLb (Hons), Third Year, University of Chittagong

we really do not know who will preserve a balance in the unstable world politics?

A Mahsenn
On mail

Chandpur Government College Vs. UC Berkeley

Probably the only thing that is common between these two schools is that both are public schools. While the whole world knows about the University of California at Berkeley, only few Bangladeshis know about the Chandpur Government College.

There is no way that the CGC can compete with the UCB.

But you might be surprised to know that, in one case, the CGC standard is higher than the UCB.

You can live in a village in Bangladesh and get an admission to the UCB without even knowing how the campus looks like. You don't have to go to there for a n y admission test. Try Chandpur Government College!

No matter if your GPA is 5.0 or whatever position you might have had in the SSC or HSC, you have to personally go to the campus of the CGC and sit for an admission test.

Every year when the time comes for the admission tests for higher education, I see these madness all over Bangladesh. Students travel all over Bangladesh for admission tests. Why can't the examination results themselves determine the students ability to undergo courses of higher studies? More surprising is the fact that the newspapers carry ads

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for admission tests in kindergartens. When will we stop this madness? **GM Solaiman (Babu)**
Santa Clara, California, USA

Mahathir's message: Fault lies elsewhere

We have got an excellent review of Dr. Mahathir's address. (Zafar Sobhan, The Daily Star, 21 October). We feel proud to have such a generous review by one of our people, while as a nation we are in the terrorist list of the US.

In fact, this balanced view and keen sense of judgement reminds us about our need to take stock of the inventory of our intellectual and of our moral code of behaviour.

Days ago, the French foreign minister seriously criticised the US invasion of Iraq and linked the rise of terrorist groups there with the invasion itself. He was right because these groups did not exist before the US led coalition forces invaded Iraq. You invade a sovereign nation, you must pay for it in kind.

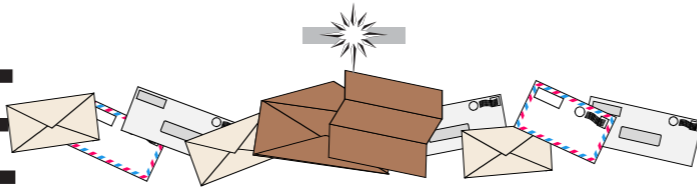
Now, we are calling the Iraqi people terrorists because they're sacrificing lives to restore their motherland's sovereignty. This is a copy of the Western perception which never addressed the Palestinians as anything other than terrorists. As Bush said after 9/11, if you're not with us, you're against us. Can politics be that much black and white?

I believe the Jews of Israel supporting their government's actions do so out of frustration generated by the persecutions they endured under the European Christians. Dr. Mahathir aptly expressed this Jewish sentiment by saying, "They survived 2000 years of pogroms....".

Mahathir's astuteness is evident in his restraint too: he did not call for a revenge against "the Jews", nor did he call for the unification of the Muslim ummah against US President George W Bush's call for a "Crusade". Nor did he call for the unification of the so called "free nations" to join in a "clash of civilisations."

Mahathir even did not remind the Muslims of their proud history that the three Crusades waged by the European Christians against the Muslims were defeated. Hence the swathe of the Muslim world as it looks today. Islam did survive through Western onslaughts in the past. It is doing so constantly: politically, militarily, culturally, and economically.

Let us try to understand that Mahathir just broached a new perspective for the Muslims. He clearly pointed out the need for "thinking" and taking actions in line with the teachings of our prophet Mohammad (SM) to win the struggle, not to take revenge. No wonder Islam's



sat e Khasias

I was deeply shocked after reading a news in The Daily Star on the 20th of October that the local timber traders attacked on the innocent Khasia people at the National Park in Magurchhara, Moulavibazar. The Khasia people venerate the trees as God. They are also against deforestation. They want to live in the jungle peacefully. But the local mastans don't want them to lead a peaceful life. The local illegal timber traders attacked on the Khasias because they were trying to stop protecting their betel leaf gardens. We know that the Khasias grow betel leaves to earn a livelihood.

Instead of helping the Khasia people, the forest authority joined with local people and attacked on them. They destroyed many valuable properties. The gang looted many household besides smashing the houses. The local gang also damaged vehicles of Khasia headmen. I work with the Khasia people. But was not around at that time.

We are in the 21st century. We don't want to be attacked by each other. Instead of attacking each other, we should use our energy for the development of the country together.

I hope the authorities concerned would take stern actions against the real culprits and compensate the Khasia people.

Rajmoni Wahengbam
Kathal Bagan, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Fault lies with incompetence, not weekends

The weekly holiday issue is splashing over the letter columns again. The desire is to change the weekly holiday from Friday to Sunday. The arguments are that the developed West has Saturday and Sunday as their weekly holidays, and we need to follow that in order to facilitate our trade and commerce with them.

But in today's age of spectacular communication and information technology, the trade and commerce actually takes no break by their weekdays or weekends. And, whether we have the weekend on Friday or Sunday or even Wednesday, it should not make much difference. Many companies are working round the clock with a global workforce that uses modern information technology. They are creating miracles even though they are following different work and holiday schedules.

We are half a day off the West due to our geographical location and we have many other holidays, which will not match with Western holidays. We can not do anything about those.

Ninety per cent of our population being Muslims, weekend on Friday is actually more efficient in Bangladesh. Then people would not have to take an extended break for the *Jumaa* prayer on Friday, which actually would essentially spoil a working day. (Imagine how it would be in the West if for some reason Sunday would be a working day with a 2 hour break for church service).

It would be far more effective for us in boosting our trade and commerce overseas if we focus our attention to improving our product and service qualities, reduce corruption, follow business ethics and improve overall competence in every field. Developing our manpower with quality education; improving our infrastructure (including the information technology); creating security and accountability in our trade and commerce; are what we need badly in order to better compete in today's world. Faulting the present weekly holiday with inconveniences is nothing but a display of our usual tendency to find an excuse for a failure. It also speaks of our inability to pick up the courage to confront the issues.

Wahid Chowdhury
One-mail

Who are those 11 per cent?

The whole nation is now united and protesting against India's plan to divert Eastern Himalayan river waters. This plan is a threat to the lives of over 400 Million people living in Bangladesh and West Bengal, Bihar, Assam and adjoining states of India. Serious ecological imbalance will devastate these areas as well as Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Myanmar if the plan is implemented.

The daily *Prothom Alo* in its Internet opinion poll on 7.9.2003 reported that 89 per cent people of Bangladesh feel that the implementation of the alleged plan would be disastrous to us while 11 per cent did not agree.

I find the poll's result very interesting. Who are those 11 per cent? Do they realise the consequences of their views?

Asaduzzaman
Dr. Kudrat-E-Khuda Road, Dhaka

Corruption, clamour and the TI index

It is indeed a disgrace for us to be branded the most corrupt nation for three consecutive years. And, it was unwise of the present government to react exactly the same manner as the past government did when Bangladesh was branded the most corrupt country for the first time.

But, as the BNP used this as a political tool to embarrass the then AL government, the AL did the same this time. The BNP however made it an elec-

tion pledge to remove the disgrace by acting strongly in curbing corruption. Unfortunately, we haven't seen that happening as yet. Instead, BNP refused to accept the TI index this time.

The very party that hailed the TI report when it went in its favor is now acting in the same manner as its opponent did in the past. What could be more hypocritical than this?

The AL, on the other hand, shouldn't have taken advantage of the report because it had discredited the methodology of the index when it was in the government. But the party now accepts the report wholeheartedly and uses this as a political tool to embarrass the government; exactly in the same manner as that of the BNP.

While we may argue over the subjective biases of the index to downgrade its credibility, it won't change the fact that corruption is a major problem for us. If nothing else, with a little extra effort, we can come out of the most corrupt status. All we need to do is to outperform Nigeria, our nearest competitor, by improving our score a little more than 1.4 (and hope that Nigeria remains at 1.4 next year!).

Indeed we have improved a lot from a meagre 0.4 in 2001 to 1.3 this year. It's an improving trend, and maybe we will come out of the most corrupt status by next year! Should that happen, it will be interesting to see how the two parties react.

KM Zubair Sadeque
Duquesne University, USA

PM for the Ummah or SQC?

Khaleda Zia addressed the concluding session of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) in Putrajaya, Malaysia on October 17. We realise that it was Dr. Mahathir -- the present Chairman of the OIC -- whose inaugural speech was widely acclaimed. But our leader's speech delivered in the concluding session was also appreciable.

However, I cannot understand how our PM had asked for supporting our candidate for the post of the OIC General Secretary at a time when the Muslim world needed a leader capable of outwitting the West? Was it an electioneering tactic to campaign for the person of her choice, or it was an expression of her solidarity with the Ummah at this critical juncture of the OIC history?

We know very well that she has full confidence in the leadership of Mr. Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury (SQC) since she has accepted this very intelligent (no comments on the use of that intelligence!) person who once uttered filthy words even targeting Begum Zia herself.

MAS Molla
BAAS, Dhaka

Let's rally behind Mahathir



"...To believe that one can ingratiate oneself with a mortal enemy by denying that his lashes sting; to deny one's own degradation in return for a moment's respite; to support one's enemy who will only use his strength to destroy are all parts of the ghetto philosophy." (Bruno Bettelheim, a Holocaust survivor, in *Recollections and Reflections* (Thames and Hudson, 1990).

Bettelheim was referring to the reluctance of German Jews to respond to a call for boycotting German products during Hitler's reign. Apparently, the Jews in Germany were under the impression that playing nice with Hitler, even at their own cost, would somehow make life easier for them.

Most of the rulers of the Muslim world today are behaving like Bettelheim's German Jews, hoping that appeasing the Jews will lead to an easier life for them. Appeasing Hitler did not bring respite for the Jews, nor will it for the Muslims.

Muslims need to unite today. We need to raise our head high and put our feet firmly on the ground like the Jews have done -- after almost complete annihilation by the Europeans. We need a leader like Mahathir Mohamad to guide us to replicate the success the Jews had achieved. I am convinced that ninety per cent of world's Muslim population will unite under Mahathir if he takes up the OIC leadership. Let's rally behind him.

Mostafa Abdullah
Old DOHS, Dhaka

Mahathir deserves applause from the West too

Malaysian prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad deserves appreciation for his historic speech at the opening of the 10th session of the OIC conference at Putrajaya, Malaysia, on 10th October 2003. What the prime minister said is absolutely correct.

After the fall of the Communism in Eastern Europe, and also with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the USA became the only super power in the world. Everybody knows very well who controls the Bush Administration and the USA.

While the Palestinians lead a miserable life in occupied areas, where they are suppressed and oppressed by the Israeli army almost everyday, the Israelis get the full support of the world's lone super power.

It is nothing but a tale of gross discrimination. Western governments and their media stirred a hue and cry and severely criticised Dr. Mahathir for his comments about the Jews. But they utterly failed to appreciate him for taking a stand against those Muslims who are bringing bad name to our holy religion by resorting to acts of terror.

To criticise or to say anything against Islam and the Muslims is alright, but to say a single word against the Jews, Israel and the western countries is a crime, said Mahathir.

This is nothing but duplicity, double standard, hypocrisy as well as hatred towards Muslims and Islam.

Iqbal Ahmed

On e-mail

Israel responds to Mahathir's diatribes



When Dr. Mahathir made his speech at the 10th OIC meeting, a flurry of outrage from the Western world followed about his alleged anti-Semitic comments. For a start, what Dr. Mahathir said wasn't voted unanimously by everyone in the world as offensive. Even if they did, those were only "words." Muslims only speak, the West acts.

But for the EU and the US, Mahathir's words were unacceptable. On the other hand, approximately around the same time (20 Oct), Israel launched one of the heaviest terrorist attacks on the Palestinians to show that Mahathir's words would be matched by US-supplied Israeli arsenal. The attack on unarmed Palestinians was so heavy-handed that some Knesset members deplored it.

To be precise, Israel killed 8 people and injured 100. It then showed its thumbs to the UN by ignoring, as in the past, a General Assembly Resolution (of 22 Oct. Ref: The Guardian) that asked for its illegal fence to be dismantled. My question is; if mere words were so uncomfortable to the US and the EU that they had to be condemned immediately, how come there is yet to be a formal condemnation of Israel's dastardly act that caused deaths to 8 Palestinians, including women and children, and injured another 100? Is the blood of a Muslim cheaper than a Christian or a Jew? Israel, US and the EU might speak in different languages, but their overall message is same: kill Muslims.

Muslims are allowed to do only one thing: be killed from bombs and missiles without making any noise. If they make any noise or they do anything other than die quietly, they automatically become terrorists. Other people can kill, defy UN, make nukes, steal lands, invade sovereign countries, even commit war crimes. They don't even receive a formal condemnation. Lack of any condemnation from the people who kept whining about Dr. Mahathir's comments, ironically, has proved one thing: Mahathir just hit on the head and said the right thing.

Azad Miah
Oldham, UK

two big parties are playing with our fate. Problem is, a football match lasts only about 90 minutes, but can anyone say when this match with our life is going to be over?

Manorial Hassan
(Shimul)
Department of English, Zia Hall, Dhaka University

Balance of power in world politics

A leader's decision is

ing Japan. Only China seems on the rise after thousand years of silence. India is also trying to come out of a political morass, but it is proving costly for her.

Sine the politicians rule the world, leadership errors could be reduced through some kind of balancing juggle. In the past, the UN was the body that tried to keep a balance in the competing interests of world politics. As the UN seems to have lost its gilt,