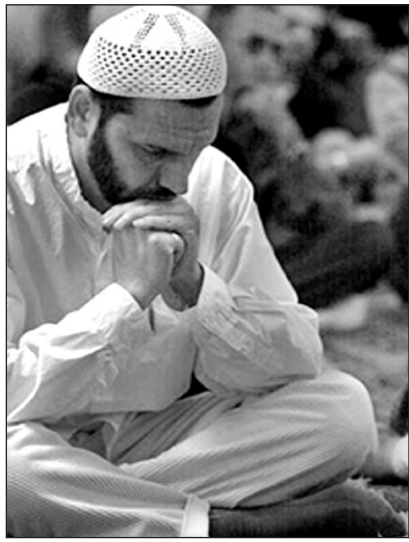


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

# Ramadan and its significance



Ramadan provides a wonderful package to overcome/solve these fatal problems.

Scientific experiments prove that it needs 21 to 29 days to translate a practice into habit. Ramadan gives 29/30 days to inculcate and cultivate certain practices to habit, so that Muslims can implement them in the rest of the months. The verse of the Holy Qur'an that obligates fasting reads: "Oh you who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may learn self-restraint" (2:183). The principle of self-denial by fasting is not a new one. The crucial question crops up: what kind of paramount significance lies in fasting that Allah has obligated it to all believers to be observed for long one month, and it was obligated to the followers of all other prophets?

The Muslim fast is not meant for self-torture. Although it is stricter than fasting observed by other religious communities, it also provides

alleviations for special circumstances. If it were merely a temporary abstinence from food and drink, it would be salutary to many people, who habitually eat and drink to excess. The instincts for food, drink, and sex are strong in animal nature, and temporary restraint from all these enables the attention to be directed to higher things. This is necessary through prayer, contemplation and acts of charity, not of the showy kind, but by seeking out those really in need. Certain standards are prescribed, but much higher standards are recommended.

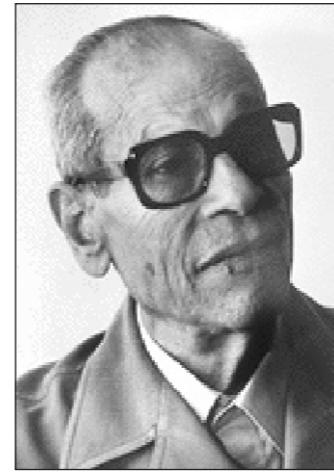
Unlike other basic worships (ibadat), which have outer visible manifestation, fasting is a hidden kind of ibadat which is seen only by Allah. Muslims' abstinence from food, drink and sex, in spite of having lot of opportunities to have those, makes them feel that none but Allah, the Omnipresent, must see it; and herein lies the notion of Takwa, the fear and constant

consciousness about Allah that one gets from fasting.

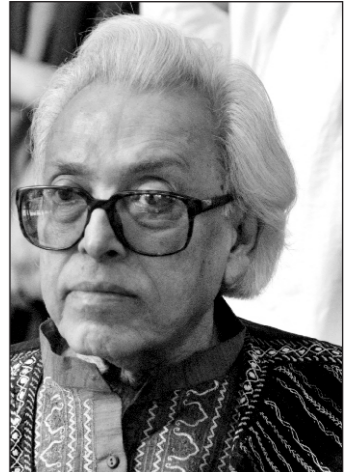
Ramadan is a month of celebration as the Holy Qur'an, the Last Revealed Book on this planet, was revealed during this month. Allah says: "Ramadan is a month in which was sent down the Qur'an, as guidance to mankind, also clear (sign) for guidance... (2: 185). It's a month of mercy, forgiveness, and freedom from fire. Profuse rewards have been promised to Muslims during this month of Ramadan.

Apart from religious significance, Ramadan has a great social and medical importance too. Rich people can realise the pangs of hunger of the poor and destitute, and consequently the realisation leads to social harmony and mutual sympathy among people. Fasting also removes fat from body and thereby provides resistance power against many diseases.

**A reader, On e-mail**



## Naguib Mahfouz and Shamsur Rahman



I thoroughly enjoyed reading the article on Naguib Mahfouz by Asrar Chowdhury. It was succinct, informative and insightful. I applaud your efforts to familiarise your readership with the remarkable literary works done in languages other than English. It illustrates cultural dynamics beyond the language and geographic confines in our new milieu.

In many ways I see a parallel between Naguib Mahfouz and Poet Shamsur Rahman. Both thrived and nourished by the respective native lands, wrote with passion and deep feeling about events and people that surrounded them and they cared so much about.

They are the giants in my literary horizon.

**Dr. Jamal Uddin, Toronto, Canada**

### High time to rally against our leaders

We all are jinxed. We are dancing to the 'evil tune' of our politicians.

Why are we making the lives of our fellow citizens hellish by supporting blockades & hartals? Why are we chasing each other on the streets? What reforms are we talking about here? Given the track record, had the AL been the ruling party today, they would have been equally even more manipulative than the BNP. Our priorities are all wrong.

The two frontline parties of this country run on whims of the two Rahman families. They function pretty much like totalitarian organisations. For their survival, they rely heavily on intimidation of the public through their respective 'goonda bahinis'. The priority should be reforming both ruling & opposition parties first, so that democratic practice replaces the dynastic & hooliganism practice within these parties. It is high time for the people of this country pressed demand for reforms of

these parties first. We should be imposing blockades on our leaders first. Instead of us chasing each other on the streets, we should be chasing our leaders and exhaust them of their breath till such time there is a genuine reform within these political parties. Make them run from city to city, mountain to mountain and let there be no refuge for these leaders who for the past three decades have made a total mess of this country.

We have to come out of being 'yes people' of our respective parties if we are to avoid turning Bangladesh into a dysfunctional & failed state for which we the common people will be equally responsible. It is high time for us, regardless of our political affiliations, to rally against our leaders with zero mercy. Enough is enough!

**Syed Husain**  
84 Old DOHS, Road 6-B  
Dhaka 1206

### Indian managers

I have read with lot of interest the above titled article written by Mr.

Munim Chowdhury and published in The Daily Star on 14-09-06. Mr. Munim deserves thanks for writing on this very important issue and the authorities i.e. the government and the other public / private sectors leaders should seriously think over this matter. He has given some examples in favour of his recommendation of providing opportunity to the local personnel who can prove themselves to be more efficient managers than most of those hired (not legally) from the neighbouring country i.e. India with 8 to 10 times higher salaries. This is draining our foreign currency as well as depriving the Bangladeshi personnel to develop their managerial skill. I wonder why our government and the other employers do not realise the simple truth that we cannot continue forever like this and the sooner we stand on our feet, the better. We should learn from India what policy they are pursuing to develop their own skilled manpower. We have the human resource but we need the mentality and some patience to develop this workforce into a skilled one through necessary training and

motivation.

I am working in a multinational company that started its business in Bangladesh power sector eight years back. At the beginning, there were a few highly paid European expatriates. But within two years' time they all were replaced by local personnel / managers and during subsequent visits they were highly impressed by finding that the management standard even improved under Bangladeshi managers. Definitely no one should expect that under usual financial benefits the local managers would deliver the high outputs. But if they were offered even the half of the benefits that are given to Indian managers, probably the employers would get similar service from local personnel. In return, our manpower will continue to develop and the country would save valuable foreign currency.

Nowadays, you will see many Indian travellers in Bangladeshi airports and bus stations of transport companies that operate cross border services. Definitely, these Indians are not visiting

Bangladesh to promote our tourism business. We are going to India to see Tajmahal and for open-heart surgery and employing Indian managers with 8 to 10 times higher salaries. Let us be patriotic and think of ourselves and our beloved country, because everybody else is doing exactly that.

**Md. Aminul Hoque**  
Khalishpur R/A, Khulna

### Kind remarks

Mr. Douglas Broderick of World Food Programme (WFP) has kindly informed us in his interview in Channel-i about the tremendous progress Bangladesh has made since his first visit in 1982. He has mentioned that in 1982 Dhaka was like a village and roads did not have much modern transportation. But now thanks to the efforts of our people with the help of the government we have grown into a better place to live in. Of course we do have our problems, but the gentleman has also told us that the price of oil has doubled and along with that prices of foods have been doubled in the last five years. Even the WFP is facing difficulties

distributing their food aid to the needy in different parts of the world. It must be some sort of consolation to learn that even a developed nation like China has many hungry people. Then how our present government is tackling the situation feeding the 140 million people is a wonder. It is sheer bad luck for our government that the price rise in energy resources happened in their term, our electricity consumption has increased manifold due to tremendous industrialisation of the country and we are short of energy supply. The opposition, instead of causing destruction, must show some sympathy and cooperate with the government to stabilise the situation, help with suggestions, healthy criticism but not violent demonstrations in the streets destroying property and endangering lives of innocent people. People do not want political unrest, certainly not a civil war. They want to work, eat, have their children educated, and wear decent clothes, a nice place to rest after a day's work and pray to God; nothing more is needed at this stage of our development. We, the people, can demand from the government to supply us enough water, electricity by peaceful means but what are we doing?

We are trying to topple the elected government from the very first day of its existence. How can they work properly to improve our lives? We certainly cannot blame the current government for the price hike in our country. Look at Russia: what they have achieved during the oil-price boom, they are again trying to dominate world politics. My thanks to Mr. Douglas Broderick, for helping our hungry people, and his nice comments about Bangladesh.

**Dr. H.K. Sadequin, M.D.**  
Mirpur, Dhaka

### Caretaker government

Apparently, the caretaker system is in jeopardy. It has become so controversial that one has to look for better alternatives. The caretaker system has already produced very negative results in at least two to three areas:

a. The development of a neutral Election Commission has suffered quite a lot, especially in maintaining the neutrality of the EC as an independent institution that should enjoy full confidence of the political parties, and, above all, confidence of the people.

b. Election monitoring has

become a fashion of the day. One would not be wrong to think that it is becoming a fashionable commercial enterprise for some. External presence in local affairs has increased a lot due to institutional failure.

With due respect to our judiciary, one can see a trend of politicisation in the system due to its major role in running the caretaker government and the Election Commission.

Readers may agree or disagree with me, but the fact remains that we need to think once again for keeping the process of democracy on track.

**A reader**  
One e-mail



## Missing fishermen

Will the missing fishermen come back? Who will answer this question? These apparently lost people were the bread earners of their families. Our weather forecast system is very poor & ineffective. So people are still badly exposed to natural disasters.

I don't know what steps the government will take for the poor helpless families of the fishermen.

**Khalid M. Shaheen, Architecture, Khulna University**

10X3

10X2

8X3