



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.

Freedom of speech

The most talked about demand of people, especially the green intellectuals is the freedom of speech. The essence of freedom of speech is to express one's thoughts in any way. Rationally, or logically speaking, to what extent are we free to express our thoughts which come into our minds? Can we yell every bit of thought about anything and everything whenever and wherever we want to without weighing the consequences, positive or negative?

Let's ponder over the issue anew to come to a conclusion.
M.K Hasan, On e-mail



PHOTOS: AFP

It's our democracy



Whatever profession you are absorbed in, whatever may be your political inclination, you will certainly share the opinion that we ourselves must nurture our democracy. We must criticise each other within the ambit of the existing political institution. Even if we conceive that we bear the instinct to fight each other, we must fight within the sphere of democracy with a view to strengthening its shield. If we fight inside, both integration and disintegration, or a certain degree of equilibrium between them, may come by turn. But if we break the shell, there remains a chance to be lost in the dark void from where it will be hard to come out. Consequently, we will be thrown into the recycle bin where all the other democratic wastes are treated by the contemporary world politics.
Ajmiry Ahmed
Goettingen, Germany

Monalisa mystery

Monalisa's mysterious smile has long baffled historians, scientists, and 'ordinary' people alike. The latest attempt to unravel the mystery has been undertaken by Canada's National Research Council, which used laser and infrared scans to create a 3D image of the famous painting. So what's this about Monalisa being pregnant? Well, it seems the latest investigation has, according to BBC News "allowed details beneath layers of paint to be seen - including a gauzy dress then associated with pregnant or new mothers."

The study was commissioned by Henri Loyrette, Director of the Musée du Louvre, who is quoted in the NRC's press release as saying: "The 3D scan of Monalisa has not only helped to further our understanding of Leonardo's technique of soft, heavily shaded modelling, but

will also help to address the conservation and deterioration concerns we have."

It's a painting that's been held up as the best example of the sfumato painting technique, but I can't help wonder if Monalisa is smiling even more now, with all the extra attention...

Efadul Huq
On e-mail

Empowering the disabled

I had the opportunity to read the above captioned article by Mr. Nasir-ur-Rahman Sinha published in your daily of 7 August 2006. Mr. Sinha could realise the pangs and pains of the disabled people of our country. He highlighted and elaborately explained the issues that touch the disabled in their day to day life in Bangladesh. They are in

miserable conditions. His observation that the Bangladesh Disability Act of 2001 has little or no effect till date is more than correct. How funny it is that the office of the National Disabled Foundation is located on the top floor of a 3-storey building. When pointed out by the writer, the chief of the office assured him that either he would install a lift in the building or shift his office to the ground floor. But neither of the options has yet been implemented. Ours is a society full of inconsistencies.

The writer gave us a list of as many as 24 internationally reputed disabled personalities who, by dint of, their strong will-power and diligence, have left the world with their marvellous achievements in different spheres of life. The world, at large, has been immensely benefited by their noble achievements and or heroic performances.

They are remembered throughout the whole world with all reverence.

His enumeration of the barriers on the way of solving the problems of the disabled and the recommendations thereof are prudent exercises and as such need to be adhered to by the competent authorities for the greater interest of the handicapped.

I would urge the government to implement his recommendations in right earnest to help these disabled persons of the country with a view to giving them the opportunity to lead a decent life. Let them not be neglected to remain dependent on begging, which is an indecent profession.

Mohammad Dabir Uddin
Uttara, Dhaka

Clout of money

When I asked an American shopkeeper in New York a few years back, "Where is Baghdad, the depot (!) of weapons of mass destruction?", he was looking at me in a strange way but answered me as usual with American confidence—"possibly in Africa". I could not laugh even, as it is not his job to learn geography besides earning money. But I recollected one of my uncle's story a few years back when he went to his village for travelling. In the dusk he was sitting on a bench in a roadside small teashop. Some farmers came there to have a cup of tea. All on a sudden he heard the conversation of those bare shirt, muddy-footed persons "Bush shouldn't do it". When my brother used to stay in Moscow during the Soviet era, he used to see people reading books in bus stations, cafes, parks etc. Now the same city is full of black money and restlessness.

Now people have started thinking of life in a narrow spectrum. To do the job for his means and then to look for crude enjoyment is the easiest way to pass time without burning your brain for knowledge. But one thing the West had was the ability to depute the real knowledgeable persons in their respective fields. That's why they are maintaining the pace of development.

Now come to us. In my childhood I used to feel the pulse of the general people towards me a bit differently as I, fortunately, was the son of a

teacher. Along with my dad, when I used to go to the market, the shopkeepers used to respect him from their hearts. We didn't have enough money. But those businessmen had enough respect and fear. They used to feel that unfortunately they didn't have that education. The respect for an educated man means respect for education. But those days are gone by - money decides everything today.

Now I can only pray for some miracle to happen and change our society.
Aronno Rahman
Shantinagar

Terrorism in Muslim countries

I am writing in response to Mahmood Elahi's letter "Terrorism in Muslim countries".

The way Elahi wrote about Muslims was quite shocking. How does he know that 9/11 was a doing of al-Qaeda? He should've gone through all of the available reports and then he could learn that it is still shrouded in mystery!
Rajiu Hasan, University of Ballarat, Sydney

World Bank

We hear much about giving impunity to the World Bank that advocates transparency and accountability. We hear much about their debt support to build infrastructure and other service sectors' capacities to lift us from our dire poverty status. Thirty-five years on, billions of dollars provided but our conditions remains proverbially as it was, and as the jargon goes stymied by the strange conditionality, ineffective, ill conceived policies and impaired ideas that came with the debts. Their doctrines helped to make things worse in some cases. Many a time they have even threatened us by suspending certain facilities, without considering the consequence.

What is inconceivable is the noise they create. The organisations are owned by the country. Being an employee of any such organisation, how come they dictate in such a humiliating manner? The code of conduct or ethics only resemble a bad corporation's dealing with their minority stakeholders. So we are minority stake-

holders and those are the bad corporations.

What is totally outrageous is the minority owner's subservient attitude towards them. Is it because they are inefficient or corrupt? Remember what Joseph Stiglitz said?

Jute sector reforms, power sector loan suspension both proved to be disastrous.

To improve on our capacity building, first we need to improve on our reading. Since our political masters are happily exploiting our education institutions and squandering on our reading ability, World Bank, IMF and ADB should come forward to help in this area to prove their concern.

Lack of capacity often stymied the implementation of ADP, as is well known to everyone.

A 10 million US dollar or Euro endowment should be created over the next five years to create facilities and train professionals to help the country.

Philanthropists should be encouraged to get involved in it as well. Designing and formulating this endowment should not be a task that cannot be undertaken by our experts.

Do you agree?
M M Haque
Jeddah, K.S.A

Caretaker govt. --a huge task ahead

It is really a dream to see a free and fair election in Bangladesh...especially when the coalition govt has already politicised the whole administration by putting their own people in various key positions during their last five years term...I don't think free and fair election is possible keeping these people in administration.

In order to set precedence of holding a free and fair election, the caretaker government has to remove all political appointees from the key administrative positions including district and thana levels and the police administration as well. This might be a huge task but it is worth trying in order to present a highly acceptable election to the nation as well as to the rest of the world...I believe the new caretaker govt. will take the challenge and become a trendsetter in history.
Mir Rashid

Vancouver, B.C., Canada

Tyranny and turmoil

Sitting in the dark in a drawing room of my friend's house at Banani DOHS, I was having my iftar, cursing myself and groping for the guilt I might have committed in the past so that God has bestowed upon us the political party now in power. Kazi Khaled Ashraf, in his article "Tyranny", published in your daily on 26 September, has narrated it as "the worst governance in the history of this country". I would like to add "since the British had left this sub-continent." Kazi Khaled Ashraf has further said that the "votes of the majority have endowed us with a government of tyranny and turmoil". I would like to add two more words "inefficiency and corruption".

People in general are now experiencing what is called the last gasp or laboured breathing because of the evil governance of the 4-party alliance during the last five years. Simultaneously, with the corruption nakedly practiced by the top echelons of the society down to the grassroots level workers of the ruling party together with the cunning and ingenious contrivance in recruiting and posting the goonda elements of the students' wing of the BNP and Jamaat-Shibir in every sensitive department of the state, the country has been brought to the precipice of a total disaster where the entire nation is now simmering with hatred.

As Member of Parliament GM Quader has observed in his article "Democratic Election" published in your daily on 25 September, that "it is more or less obvious that this type of government cannot hope for being re-elected by the people in a free and fair election" and so "all recruitments, transfers, postings, promotions, making of OSDs and putting on forced retirement have been done to have all the party loyalists in civil service and police and also in Election Commission jobs to hold key positions in next election.

Police brutality has crossed all the limits. We all know that Asaduzzaman Noor is a lovable personality. Even the members of the lowest rung of the law enforcing agency treat him on the street with respectful affection and many of them address him as Baker Bhai. Beating him mercilessly on the

street is simply alien to their nature.

So is the case with the polite politician, Saber Hossain Chowdhury. We all have seen how Barrister Nazmul Huda was simply outplayed and outmanoeuvred by him in a debate recently arranged by BBC. The treatment meted out to these two eminent personalities by the police can only give credence to the widespread conviction that the hyenas of Chhatra Dal and Chhatra Shibir were let loose on the street in the garb of the members of the law enforcing agencies.

Rezaul Karim
Malibagh, Dhaka

The Muslim world

I follow all the letters of Mr. Mahmood Elahi with great interest and admiration. He has the courage of calling a spade a spade as far as the Muslim world is concerned. It is high time that the Muslims all over the world pause to do some self-analysis and stop blaming others for their own intolerance and cruelty.

In this respect I recall the article written quite some time back on the theme "Muslims killing Muslim" by a reputed columnist, Mr. K Z Islam. He pointed out that the Iran-Iraq war which lasted 8 years had surpassed the record of the World Wars I & II in duration.

Also that, in 1970 the Jordanian army killed more Palestinians than ever killed by Israelis in the wars of 1948, 1956 and 1967.

To this record we may add most painfully the recent one of May-June this year when nearly 6,000 Iraqis were killed in sectarian violence!

The preaching about "Muslim Umma" in the mosques is a vague term and should not be taken too seriously. Muslims are spreading all over the world and settling down, in most places, as minority community. They must adapt and adjust and must learn to be patriotic and loyal to the host country. These days no country bars the religious practices of the minority communities. Don't let Mullahs to have the upper hand!

Sakhawat Hossain
Gulshan-2, Dhaka

Iraq situation



PHOTO: AFP

Three years after attacking Iraq, US President G.W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair have realised that the invasion was a mistake. Till June 23, 2006 more than one hundred thousand Iraqi civilians and more than 2,500 American soldiers lost their lives and thousands of Iraqi people have been injured. The country has been devastated; Iraqi children are dying in hospitals due to want of medicines and foods. Still every day scores of people are losing their lives from violence, no end is in sight.

It is estimated that three million dollars was wasted on Iraq and there is no accountability of nine billion dollars allotted for reconstruction of the war torn country.

I am feeling very sad, what a wastage of money for destruction. That huge amount of money could have been used for the welfare of human beings. I do not know if these people who have got power will ever realise it and use it for peace and stability in the world.

Nur Jahan, Chittagong

Playgrounds for kids

Students in general of this generation are loaded with tasks innumerable. They have a huge curriculum, dependency on the house tutors (the trend has reached a must-do situation) and a complete lack of playing fields. There are many schools in the capital and outside the capital that do not have even a small field for their students. As a result, most students lack physical fitness and mental fitness as well.

Unfortunately, these confined children have a bizarre habit of spending time inside the confines of four walls, watching TV, playing computer for an unlimited period of time and sticking to the most recent addition-- the cello-phobia.

Interestingly, guardians in these times are a bit oblivious of the prevalent situation, may be it is because of the fact that they are not left with any option.

Social experts, civil society and the authorities concerned should work united in this regard. Guardians should play the vital role in giving the desired shape to their wards' lives!

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

