

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.



North Korea

Before the collapse, the Soviet Union was a military superpower in every sense of the term. In fact, it had more nuclear warheads and missiles than the United States. Yet it collapsed like a house of cards without any military intervention. This was mainly because the Soviet Union was at least rich in natural resources and it was fairly industrialised to make a comeback after the disintegration of its vast empire. North Korea has no natural resources of any value. It is heavily dependent on China for its survival. But China is also angry at its nuclear pretensions. And China itself is concerned that collapse of North Korea might trigger mass exodus of North Korean refugees to China. North Korea is also suffering from food shortages

and without international help, its people face starvation on a massive scale. As such, North Korea's entry into the atomic club might not save it from total collapse. People of North Korea are the worst victims of the caprice of its leaders. So they must not be punished for the crime of their tormentors. Although the international community should impose a military embargo on North Korea which must not be allowed to import and export any military hardware, but it should continue to provide humanitarian aid to the people of North Korea. And the world should make preparations for helping the people if the regime collapses abruptly.

Mahmood Elahi
Iris Street, Ottawa, Canada

The dialogue



One to one Sanglap between the secretary generals of the BNP and the AL has started. One can assume that everybody in Bangladesh is looking forward to a successful dialogue which will help remove the present political impasse. However one cannot avoid mentioning a few relevant points such as:

1. It is very unfortunate that the next caretaker government chief is not above controversy. Since the issue of controversy came up we have not heard a single word from him about his partisan role in 1979, rather the government is defending his position as the chief of caretaker government which is making him more partisan.
2. In the backdrop of our political culture, the Tea Party is inclusive.

3. The issue of EC reform goes beyond any controversy. They have made themselves controversial. We all hope that in the national interest and with self-respect they will resign and pave the way for reorganisation of the EC that will enjoy confidence of the people.
4. The 8th parliament is apparently over. Reviews and comments are being heard in local and external media regarding its failures and successes. This is definitely going to be an on going process. One would appreciate if the current dialogue can seriously address the issue of making the parliament an effective law-making body, rather than running it like an indoor Paltan Maidan.

In my humble opinion, based on what I have seen and heard in news media, I will urge upon the future Speaker of the Parliament, the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader to listen to the voice of the people and act more prudently, rising above party politics and allowing MPs to use political freedom on national issues.

Finally, we all wish a successful Sanglap to overcome the present political impasse.

A reader, On e-mail

Status of women

The letter on 11 October brings out many sad points on the status of women in patriarchal societies. It is the society, which is the loser, because many scientific studies have shown that intelligence in male children travels on the X chromosome provided by the mother.

Not giving this full cognisance and restricting women in society from having proper education and share of their due status in workplace and home make the male children not so clever. The male children may have brawn but not much brain and society as a whole remains primitive as is exemplified by the Taliban recently as well as in many other patriarchal communities.

There is an old English proverb, which comes to mind: "If you educate a man, you educate a man. But if you educate a woman you educate a family".

In ancient times physical superiority in muscles and manpower decided the fate of nations, but no longer is it so.

This is the age of intelligence.

Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

Surplus OSDs!

I have an idea for the surplus OSDs at the secretariat. We have come to know

from your newspaper that there are more than 500 OSDs (may be much more) from DS to additional secretary positions sitting idle and drawing salary and benefits from the national exchequer.

Instead of keeping them idle or assigning them with election duties and making the process further controversial, why doesn't the government (or the incoming caretaker government, for that matter) send them on deputation/lien to different local and international development agencies such as Grameen Bank, BRAC, Proshika or all those international and UN bodies? In this way, their cost would be saved for 2-3 years and at the same time these mid level bureaucrats would get the necessary exposure which would help them learn the core development issues in our society. This would help them reconnect themselves with society, which many of them seem to have lost from the day they joined the cadre service.

Mostafa Shiblee
One-mail

Exchange value of taka

Exchange value of our taka reached an all time low during the tenure of the present government. Today, Tk 500 is a meagre sum. Considering the pros and

cons of the status quo, my request to the government is: introduce Tk 1,000 note.

My second query to the government is regarding the traffic problems at Mohakhali, Dhaka. The Mohakhali flyover was built during the tenure of the present government but it has proved to be ineffectual as the traffic jam of Mohakhali has further increased. Urban planners were at odds with each other regarding the construction of the flyover. But, a silver lining still prevails there. The urban planners are unanimous in their opinion that if a road is built from Agargaon to Jahangir Gate and the road from Jahangir Gate through Cantonment and northwards is altered to meet the needs of the civilian traffic, there might be a feasible solution to the question of traffic jam at this point.

Tawhid Shams Chowdhury
BRAC University

Crossfire?

Every newspaper in Bangladesh uses the word "crossfire" about incidents where some alleged criminals are killed when gunfire is exchanged between "GOOD" and "BAD" people. This action actually means a "shootout". When a third person, possibly innocent and unarmed, gets killed accidentally, we

call it a crossfire death.

I read your daily everyday on-line. It hurts me when I see this particular terminology has been used ONLY in Bangladesh.

I would consider it a great honour if you do kindly give this matter some thought.

Abul-Basher M Rahman
One-mail

Separation of judiciary

The outcome of graft cases against former president Ershad has affirmed the necessity of separation of the judiciary from the administration. As the BNP is desperately eager to bring Ershad in its alliance to ensure its victory in the forthcoming election, it is withdrawing all the cases filed against him. No doubt, due to direct influence of the government, Ershad is being acquitted from graft cases one after one. These politically motivated trials are very unfortunate for the country.

Similar political influence has also been observed in the Bangabandhu murder case. The court has totally failed to initiate the hearing of the Bangabandhu case due to mysterious 'embarrassment' of judges. Throughout the tenure of this government the court has not paid any attention to the

Bangabandhu case.

Again, as till to date our judiciary department is under the executive wing of the government, we find politicisation of the recruitment process of judges. Our Public Service Commission as well as the Supreme Judiciary Council are fully politicised and almost all recruitments through these organs are considered on the candidate's political loyalty. Of course, the recruitment to the lower court is no exception.

However, the situation in the higher court was better and at least we could claim that the procedure adopted for the appointment of judges in higher courts was fair enough. But this government has tarnished the images of judges by appointing incompetent and politically loyal people as judges in higher courts. This in turn has created a devastating situation for the country.

For good governance, a competent, impartial and honest judiciary system is a must. It is only possible if we can compel the government to separate the judicial department from the executive. We, the conscious citizens of the country, must be vocal in this context.

Md. Anwarul Kabir
Faculty Member
Department of Computer Science, AIUB

The Nobel Prize and a happy nation

Do you think Dr. Muhammad Yunus could be invited to address the Jatiyo Sangsad?

He will no doubt be invited to speak in learned bodies and societies the world over. I am sure a civic reception will be given in Dhaka. But an address to the Sangsad may inspire our politicians. If not, at least it could go down in history as a note.

J.D'Silva, PhD
One-mail

I got the news of the Nobel Prize in the morning, and checked my email right away. There was already a congratulatory email waiting for me from Arch Shubhra (she is from India), and another ecstatic voicemail from Munnu, (another Bangladeshi friend from Dallas).

It was a very emotional day for me, as I couldn't stop blurt-ing it out to whoever I came across. I was beaming with joy the whole day... basking in the glory of the victory. I knew I wasn't alone in this experience, when the president of my company, in the middle of a work meeting, looked at me and said in a very serious tone, "Why haven't you raised the Bangladeshi flag yet?" I immediately started laughing. He turned around, looked at others and said, "Nobel Peace Prize! Do you realise how serious that is? Do you understand what a great honour that is? Congratulations!"

The rest of the evening, we celebrated the occasion at a restaurant with a couple of friends. One of my colleagues said, he made a contribution to Dr. Yunus' funds once and now feels proud of it. And I kept saying how I badly wanted to go back to Dhaka to celebrate this occasion with family and friends.

News like this means a whole lot more for Bangladeshis living abroad... because it is not only a matter of national pride and joy, but is also something extremely personal. This has to do with one's sense of identity, self-respect and dignity in a

foreign land, especially when most people throw a quizzical or sympathetic look, every time Bangladesh comes up.

Ershad Ahmed
One-mail

It was Friday which means last class of the week at Vienna Uni of Business and Economics. Our teacher congratulated Turkish students on the success of the Turkish novelist who had won the Literature Nobel Prize this year. Just after the class when I went to check mail in uni computer room I heard the latest news on Dr. Yunus' Nobel Prize.

Like millions of Bangladeshis back home I feel the joy here in this foreign land for his success and my eyes get filled with tears of emotions when I saw yesterday his photos and interviews everywhere....

Indeed it is something I have been waiting for more than six years like all others. Sarker Ashek Mahmud Probal
Vienna, Austria

The greatest and the biggest victory we have won in the post liberation Bangladesh so far. This is the first time in my life I am feeling my birth in this country is simply not a matter of sorrow. From 13 October 2006 my continuous pessimistic approach to life has changed.

Salute the Greatest Son of the soil: Professor Muhammad Yunus.
AlAsad
An NGO worker

The Nobel Peace Prize to Dr. Yunus could not have come at a better time for us. We desperately needed some good news in the national arena, and the Nobel to Dr. Yunus at this point in time in our national history is something that the nation could only dream of.

For the past few days, the nation is forced to observe the fiasco of a national dialogue between the two major political parties when the issue at

stake could have been solved easily long time ago if the political parties had the sincerity to do so. As Dr. Yunus himself pointed out in his interviews with the electronic media on the day of announcement of the award, all it needs is sincerity of the political parties in working together towards finding a peaceful solution.

Dr. Yunus getting the award has created a unique opportunity before the nation to get over this political crisis once and for all. With this achievement of monumental proportion, Dr. Yunus can now play the catalytic role in convincing the two major political parties in finding a solution to the crisis soon. And if Dr. Yunus is to be of any inspiration, it can perhaps motivate Justice Hassan to take the opportunity of announcing publicly of his inability to take the responsibility of the caretaker government. The sooner he makes the announcement, the better it is for the country.

We can only be grateful to Dr. Yunus for giving us the pride and joy that we do not get to enjoy very often. It is people like Dr. Yunus that make us keep dreaming for a better Bangladesh.

From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you, Dr. Yunus!
Zubair KMSadeque
Lecturer, North South University

I couldn't control my emotion while listening to one of the greatest news of my life. Dr. Muhammad Yunus being awarded the Noble peace prize was not only mine; rather it was the most desired news of the whole nation for a very long time.

Dr. Yunus' love for the people of this country has brought him the reward, which has also brought tears of joy in our eyes. We had to suffer the heartburn of being labelled as citizens of a third world country, which is called a bottomless basket. But do we care now? Right at this

moment we are not the citizens of a country, which is champion in corruption. We are now the people of the country where a man like Dr. Yunus was born.

I was not lucky enough to feel the joy of the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, as I wasn't born then. But I can surely say that this joy can't be less than that of 1971.

For the senior citizens of our country, this achievement has brought the chance to taste that pride again. And for us, the young generation, it has made us feel for the first time how worthy our country is.

Our heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Yunus and so many thanks for making us so proud.
Nabila Nudrat
Department of Business Administration
Jahangirnagar University

This is an extraordinary achievement for Bangladesh and I am prouder than ever. We could be a poor/ third world country but visionary and creative people like Dr. Yunus are working hard for brightening our image.
Sohel
Toronto

Professor Dr. Muhammad Yunus, the Nobel laureate, presents before the nation a new challenge of development.

He has proved that the service to the distressed and poverty stricken people could justify the Nobel Prize, not the economic theory alone. The banker of the poor proved that banking is possible with people without collateral security and with 98% recovery. Besides, this banking helps to overcome poverty employing the poor in income generating activities and thus devising a meaningful poverty reduction strategy. This is a new concept applied for the benefits of the poor.

Peace can be established only when poverty is eradicated. Terrorism, lawlessness, absence of good governance

etc originate from poverty. Dr. Yunus has proved that this poverty could be reduced with micro credit assistance.

The politicians must realise the truth and try to give the nation true leadership.
Kumar Prithwiraj Nath
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

It's like a rainbow in the dark! Yes, when we, the Bangladeshis were caught in a maze of uncertainties of all kinds just ahead of the election, there has been the bright ray of hope for us all Dr. Yunus' Nobel Peace Prize. We are honoured, we are proud, we have gained the faith in ourselves that we achieved through our glorious liberation war in 1971.

Nobel laureate Dr. Yunus, founder of the revolutionary micro credit bank-

The Grameen Bank, has brought great laurels for the country. We will solve all our differences of ideas, political and non-political, to steer our dear nation ahead, working hard hand in hand with proper guidance from the Nobel laureate.
Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

My fervent appeal to our countrymen would be: "For God's sake, please do not drag the nation's pride Prof. Yunus to the despicable domain of Bangladeshi politics. Let him remain high above in the sky of glory." In a country where a person of unshakable integrity and unbending honesty, that is Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, could be dubbed as 'traitor', 'betrayer' and what not by our sick politicians for his uncompromising role as the President of the Republic during the 2001 general election, we do not wish such a fate for a person whose name and fame transcend well beyond the narrow Bangladeshi border. He belongs to the world as the untiring 'Friend of the Poor'. Just spare him from the dreaded and power-hungry



political parties. A 'Third Party' which does not necessarily aspire for political powers but has the goodwill of the people and does not have any stain of corruption. But if need be can replace either of the political parties because of its tremendous success in business at home and recognitions from abroad. This 'Third Party' can exert enough influence to direct the political parties to clean up their acts and refrain from destructive politics. Dr. Yunus could be that catalyst.
Hassan Nawaz
Wilmington, Delaware, USA

I am a Bangladeshi physicist living and working in Massachusetts. Today, I am walking in the corridors of my laboratory, where I work, with my head held high with pride. Please convey my congratulations and my sincerest gratitude to Prof. Yunus for making me a proud Bangladeshi.
Bamandas Basu, One-mail

This announcement could not have been better timed! At the moment when the headline news is about mud slinging, rampaging factory workers, killings & corruption etc., Prof. Yunus' achievement should make the nation proud. My heartfelt respect and congratulations to Prof. Yunus.
Nahid Rahman, Oxford, UK