



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.

Who will be the next US president?

With colossal wastage and extravagance of untold billions and billions of dollars; US troops bogged down in Afghanistan and Iraq; blind support to Israeli atrocities on the Palestinians; spread of international terrorism; high unemployment; taxation, education and health services in shambles; and the image and prestige of the United States of America wrecked world over, would US President George Bush be re-elected in November 2004?

Many Americans opine that the result of 2001 Presidential election was manipulated. Democrat candidate Vice President Al Gore got 51,003,894 popular votes and 266 electoral votes, Republican candidate George Bush got 40,459,211 popular votes and 271 electoral votes. They further say that in order to divert the public opinion from the controversial election, President George Bush cunningly attacked Afghanistan first and then Iraq. He disregarded and discarded the American public opinion, opposition and demonstration against the aggression before, during and after the US invasion of Iraq. But George Bush was belligerent, war mongering and dictatorial. He violated the UN charter, principles and resolutions, flouted the world public opinion, played mockery with democracy and human rights, abused his powers and position and committed crime against humanity.

"He has put a spin on the truth to justify a war that will become one of the worst blunders in more than two centuries of American foreign policy," said US Senator Edward Kennedy. And Sue Niederer, mother of a US soldier killed in Iraq, said, "He died for President Bush's vendetta."

Would the Democratic Senator John Kerry, a Vietnam veteran, be able to get elected to Oval Office, do away with the wrong doings of President George Bush, and put the USA on the right track again?

We wish our friends, the American people, to decide their own future for a better tomorrow, justice and fair play for the peoples of Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and the whole world.

OH Kabir
Dhaka

DU teachers' strike

I fully agree with the views expressed by Wahid Choudhury in his letter "DU teachers' protest". The attack on Dr. Humayun Azad, one of the most outspoken writers in the contemporary Bangla literature, is considered a heinous way to stop the freedom of mind that the DU teachers are protesting from the very beginning to put an end to such activities.

But the way they chose to protest the attack is questionable. Why DU students are expendable and the private university students, whom they continue to teach during the strike, are not is a big question. The answer is simple: in a private university no class means no pay. So the strike is not scratching the DU teachers' interests, rather it gives them enough time to do other jobs.

There are very few DU teachers who come out on the streets to protest the attack. It is assumed that refraining from taking classes is protest enough from their side.

Do the DU teachers think that they can bring any benefit to the nation by not taking classes? The

Third force

With the coming re-polls after the resignation of Mahi and Mannan from their JS seats, they are including their leader Dr. B Chowdhury, the cynosure of all eyes. Are they going to take the plunge into politics is the question. Some say yes, but not right now. The son of the past president and Major Mannan both are familiar face in their constituencies. This time they may not just be a silent campaigner for them, and for the political career of renegade Dr. B Chowdhury, but they are perhaps preparing for their own political career. Dr. Chowdhury perhaps has a plan to get into it some time later. Well-built, wealthy, soft spoken with quiet good looks, both

want to do?

Sirajul Islam

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Blocking the alternative force

Former President Dr. Badruddoza Chowdhury--the man or icon initiating the alternative political force in Bangladesh--was harassed on the way to the scheduled meeting at Muktangan on



Mahi and Mannan should, however, know that politics does not always depend on good face or good image.

Most of the people in politics now in Bangladesh wanted to earn lots of money, get into business etc. But why they came back home from heaven? Perhaps something must have changed. Not perhaps but actually, I think. It seems people of all ages like to support what they are telling. But what one tells in Bangladesh matters a little. What is done, and can be done realistically does matter a lot.

Dr. Kamal sounds very good as Dr. Chowdhury. But can they do what they

March 11. His son Mr. Mahi B. Chowdhury and defecting BNP-MP Major (Rtd.) Abdul Mannan suffered the same fate at Farm Gate. A hoodlum was about to run over them with his motor-bike. The hoodlum is believed to be a pro-BNP man and other JCD activists were around helped even by the police of the state!

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan was quick (during the first launching of the forum) to claim that the desertion will hurt neither the government nor the party. If that is so, why so much hurt-burning that the police is instructed to dismantle the

result is that their students are the lone and ultimate sufferers of the strike. So I urge the DU teachers to think twice before continuing the strike any further.

Md. Mynul Mamun
Dhaka

Political methodology

The other day I found on the drawing room table a photocopy of a textbook on Methodology in Research, taught in a private university, as used by a student. It was originally published (in a neighbouring country) in 1985 and underwent a couple of reprints and updates. But I was rather surprised to find no chapter on systems analysis, and the chapter on the use of computers in research methodology was restricted to half a page only.

As a regular reader of newspa-

pers, the idea crossed my mind (as a citizen trying to keep himself informed) how the mature political leaders themselves used methodology and systems analysis on improvement of local political culture, considering the overuse of hartal philosophy. The latter is now having a negative effect on the general public, through an overdose (like too much salt in the curry).

Therefore my request to the local analysts is to clarify this technical problem to the citizens and voters; so that the bad politicians are discouraged to remain in the field. Public service is plain enough to grasp without going into the technicalities of actual methods, as practised in the civil service, and by the NGOs and the business companies and corporations and other public-oriented organisations.

It is rather confusing to read that even the leadership in the powerful developed countries make mistakes in their foreign and other policies, not to speak of countries like Bangladesh (which has earned the latest foreign title of being the most dangerous country in South-east Asia for journalists; after successive retention of the infamous title of the most corrupt country in the world).

It appears there is something basically wrong in the political culture and science applied in these modern times; and new and varied political and economic solutions are being forcefully imposed on the DCs and LDCs. The tempo has quickened, and new energy sources and resources are being grabbed right and left by the experienced exploiters.

Back to the hartal culture. We have seen the quit India and quit East Pakistan movements against foreign masters. The technique has to change for internal fight among the political parties all for the sake of the nation or country. But the old leadership appear to have half-closed minds and are reluctant to whip up the emotions of the masses through new ways of decreasing the systems losses we have been experiencing three decades after independence.

How to make the errant political leaders listen to sane proposals?

AHusnain
Dhaka

Dreams of expatriates

I was born in Bangladesh a year before it gained independence at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives, including those of many of the most talented people of the country at the time. In the very year of independence, my father arranged for my mother, me and two siblings to join him in Britain. I have lived here ever since, returning to Bangladesh only for short holidays which have become more frequent during the last three years. I am young, educated (I have two degrees, including an MA in international relations from a highly regarded British university) and could contribute in a small but important way to my country and its future. I have friends of a similar background who, like me, have been seriously considering uprooting themselves from their secure lives in Britain and settling in Bangladesh. Of course, we each have our selfish reasons for wanting to live and work in Bangladesh stemming from a love of the country and its culture, which we share. However, we also share a common desire to contribute at least as much as we take. Unfortunately, and to my dismay, my friends and I are increasingly of the opinion that the country we pine for is not ready for us or we for it. With each day that passes the country is descending deeper and deeper into the most appalling lawlessness, corruption and anarchy.

We have spent almost our entire lives in the UK, one of the

richest and most advanced post-industrial societies in the world, but have never looked at Bangladesh through the proverbial rose tinted glasses. We are well aware of the comparative disadvantages that would face us living and working in one of the least developed countries in the world, made worse by rampant corruption and archaic bureaucracy. Those things we could live with, and hopefully in our own small ways, help to change. However, staking our futures and those of our families in today's Bangladesh as it spirals towards lawlessness would be irresponsible. This is devastating to many educated and successful British and American Bangladeshis who want to contribute to and have a stake in Bangladesh's future.

I despair at the state of politics and 'democracy' in Bangladesh which is at the root of the current

lawlessness and economic under-performance of the country. But for a short period during its independence Bangladesh has been ruled by a succession of corrupt, incompetent, self-aggrandising and power hungry cliques. The demise of democracy is foreshadowed by the rise of personality cults.

The two most prominent political figures in the country, who have been a feature of Bangladeshi politics for far too long, and the historical legacies that they carry with them have reduced politics in Bangladesh to something akin to a soap opera. Unfortunately, this soap opera is real and its consequences are severe. The ordinary people of the country are forced to play the part of mere extras in the background, anonymous and voiceless.

Our Prophet (pbuh) said that the ink of a scholar's pen is holier than the blood of a martyr. Bangladesh can turn the road towards peace and hope for all its inhabitants. But the evil that currently plagues our country must be fought from a position of moral superiority and through democratic means. All over the world we have witnessed the power of civil society in achieving momentous change through collective will and moral strength. It is never easy when there are pervasive and powerful vested interests committed to maintaining the status quo.

However difficult, change is possible and necessary. It is necessary whether you are an uneducated landless labourer or the MD of a large business. Both suffer in a society ridden with corruption at every level, where thugs are allowed to reign, and coercion and compulsion suppress democratic freedoms. All sections of civil society including the poor, rich, intellectuals, the free media, honest politicians, lawmakers and law enforcers need to organise democratic resistance against the forces that have denied hope and freedom to the majority of Bangladeshis for far too long. The people of Bangladesh need to shout with one voice until they are heard.

Koyas Uddin
London School of Economics
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Doctored meters

The introduction of CNG vehicles was welcome by the city dwellers despite having different questions in mind. Two stroke baby taxis that were replaced by CNG vehicles were not environment-friendly and were costly since they consumed petrol as fuel. On the other hand, the new vehicles use Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), which is not imported. So they are a foreign currency saver and at the same time environment-friendly. With these new vehicles a new meter was also introduced to ensure fairness in fare. The authorities have fixed the fares for three wheelers and other vehicles.

The meter that is used to calculate distance and fare is an electronic device. Doctoring it is a very easy task and deceiving a person is also easy as most of the people do not know much about it.

Our traffic police department is responsible for checking licence and other documents of the vehicles. I do not know whether they are aware of the importance of checking meters of the CNG vehicles. They should look into the matter immediately in the interest



General Niazi

The historical picture of signing of the 'surrender document' by Lt General Amir Abdullah Niazi and Lt General Jagjit Singh Aurora on 16 December, 1971 at Dhaka Race Course is very popular and known to most people in this subcontinent.

The expiry of General Niazi (1915-2004) at the age of 89 at Lahore has rekindled the memories of the War of Liberation along with the significance of this picture. In fact, all freedom fighters in exile and within the then occupied territories were in great tension when in the last leg of the nine months of war, the combined forces encircled the Dhaka city and General Manekshaw's message to General Niazi to surrender unconditionally was repeatedly being announced through all media. At this critical juncture, some people were afraid of total destruction of the capital and other big cities by the Pakistani Army as an act of revenge before their surrender which was almost inevitable. We were eagerly awaiting the decision of the late Niazi since his decision could save the lives of millions, property of uncountable value and ensure the independence of Bangladesh.

The new generation might find a disgraced, vanquished and disdained General in Niazi who conceded a historical defeat with 91,000 soldiers. But I think differently. This decision of the Late General was an appropriate one for the cause of civilisation as well as the existence of Pakistan as a country.

The reality is that the decision of the late General saved Pakistan from total disintegration and averted massive killing and destruction.

Many of us do not know that Niazi was decorated with 'Military Cross' for his role in the Burma war front in 1944. Viceroy Lord Wavel awarded three commanders of British Army "Knighthood" on 15 December, 1944. During this ceremony, only two Indian officers received this award and Niazi was one of them. He was the son of a Pathan family from Mianwali in Punjab. Imran Khan Niazi, renowned cricket player, is also from the same tribe which is fond of war and sports. After matriculation, Niazi enrolled himself in the army and climbed to a high position by dint of his merit.

In fact, the allied forces won the battle in 1971 against the Pakistan Army due to the unqualified support and strong will of the people of Bangladesh.

Although the auto-biography of the late General "The Betrayal of East Pakistan" did not reflect the truth, but thanks to him for avoiding a blood bath.

Dhiraj Kumar Nath, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka

of passengers exposed to 'meter tinkering'.

Md. Tajul Islam Chowdhury
One-mail

Alien at home

I have confined myself within the room. My relatives, friends insist on my visiting them. I was scared, 1971 flashed through my mind. My mother, holding a pillow, I and other villagers fleeing, rattling of guns, smoke, all so scary. Feeling for life is always the same. I couldn't venture out across the road, if a stray bullet comes my way, a pelted stone hit my skull!

I am on an official assignment for six days in my home country, my young children are far away, things look so worrisome. What to do. How I am going to live when I come back, all storming in my mind. Feeling helpless. All my official programmes were shifted

by a day. In my own country when I feel so bizarre how about those dignitaries, officials coming for the Micro summit, players and their relatives, journalists who came to cover U-19 World Cup cricket? Those coming for the first time with the hope that they would set up a business organisation?

Feeling bored, going through the dailies but nothing encouraging to read. News is mostly about today's hartal (March 10). Life is paralysed and threatened, business is halted. Corruption is eating away the wealth, mismanagement and poor governance is harmful, so is hartal. I could not read anything that says we have to rise together against the misrule. We have to build and consolidate a common understanding on all these points. Hartal, work stoppage and violence have become the norms of protests.

Another hartal was declared in the night. We have to travel 170 km southwest along with two of my foreign colleagues. That is now squeezed within tomorrow's programme as I refused to travel in the night.

This is for the first time that I deeply felt the effects of hartal. I was quite sad and sceptical about the burning issues and their general interpretations.

M Haque, Jeddah, KSA

Invasion of Dhanmondi!

My thanks to Badal Hasib for his letter to the editor on March 10. In these days of political disorder it takes extraordinary courage to highlight the problems that political parties create when they use residential areas as political space. As Mr. Hasib stresses, such activities compound the already unbearable plight caused by the invasion of Dhanmondi by illegal schools, colleges, universities, shops and vendors. Mr. Hasib's description of the situation on Road 3A, since a political party set up business, is all too familiar. Police high-handedness is preventing residents from leaving and entering their homes. Blockades reduce homeowners into second-class citizens on their own street!

However, all is not lost. We, on Road 32 (new 11), find that higher-ups in the party echelon are not always aware of the mistreatment of residents by over-zealous security people. Also, thanks to sycophants and hangers-on who surround them, such leaders are kept from knowing that loudspeakers used for party celebrations and protests have a tendency to backfire. The din makes it virtually impossible for the ailing or elderly to rest during the day or for children to study. Noise pollution is one of the most harmful forms of health hazard.

We suggest taking up the problem on Road 3/A with senior members of the offending party.

Sultana Alam, Dhaka

Well played Bangladesh!



Bangladesh have at last won the 3rd ODI against Zimbabwe at Harare. It was really a dream for Bangladeshis which has come true after a long wait. There is no doubt that the cricketers really put up a great show. We, the cricket lovers, must congratulate heartily all cricketers of Bangladesh.

We must congratulate the young Md. Ashraf who played a tantalising, splendid knock of 50 odd runs from just 32 balls. Our bowlers also deserve warm congratulations for their excellent bowling which restricted the opposition to 238. Among the bowlers, we must mention the name of Md. Rafique who has always been the 'lone navigator' of our ship. Like before, he really bowled well. Anyway, it was the total team effort which made this victory possible.

Md. Ashiqul Haque
West Hajipara Road,
Dhaka

Congratulations, Bangladesh cricket team. Thanks for presenting us a great victory over Zimbabwe.

Your victory is a great gift for the nation steeped in uncertainty. Let us change everything for the better!

Rifat Mahbub
Dhaka University

Israeli walls

Israel's decision of constructing a fencing wall in the West Bank is clearly a violation of international law and human rights.

Consequently, the rights of Palestinian people will be undermined seriously and terrorist activities will increase.

If Israeli authorities want to construct fencing walls in the West Bank on the plea of stopping suicide bomb attacks, they should construct fencing walls along the pre-1967 international borders.

Mir Kamal Chowdhury
Asian University of Bangladesh

War on terror

To claim a divine, or any other, right to occupy an already occupied land on the basis of an old book and religion, or on any other basis, is a height of absurdity and

arrogance. To subsequently deny that one is conducting wars and defences of colonial occupation and expansion is a height of mendacity and demonstrates a profound lack of intellectual and moral integrity, as does the constant depiction and portrayal of the victims and desperate, bloody retaliators as the instigators and perpetrators of the whole hideous, nasty and tragic mess.

These are the facts that are a significant, justified and undeniable cause of much Muslim anger and hostility towards Israel, its Western allies and others, and will continue to be so until honesty and some semblance of justice prevails. Addressing such root causes would be a far more effective and felicitous way of spending the vast amounts of money, efforts and resources directed at the various wars on terror.

John Finch
Australia

