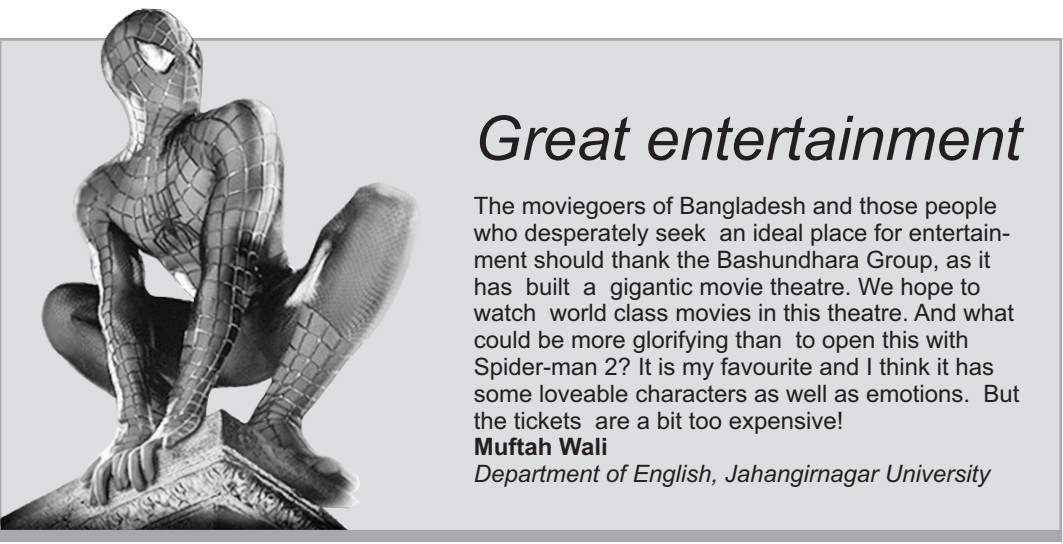


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Great entertainment

The moviegoers of Bangladesh and those people who desperately seek an ideal place for entertainment should thank the Bashundhara Group, as it has built a gigantic movie theatre. We hope to watch world class movies in this theatre. And what could be more glorifying than to open this with Spider-man 2? It is my favourite and I think it has some loveable characters as well as emotions. But the tickets are a bit too expensive!

Muftah Wali
Department of English, Jahangirnagar University

He is right, but...

This refers to the letter by Mr. Ekram Kabir under the caption "Future of Bangladesh". In principle, I do agree with many of the observations made by Mr. Gaffar Chowdhury on the overall deteriorating state of Bangladesh. I am also a fan of Mr. Chowdhury as far as his literary prowess, use and play of words are concerned. Having followed his writings closely in recent years, particularly since he became a British citizen, I find that his writings do certainly contain elements of frustration and partisanship. One is welcome to be critical but should not indulge in vilification. If Mr. Chowdhury feels so strongly about the country, then let him be here and help us fight all that are threatening the secular elements of Bangladesh. It is often easier writing things about your country sitting in a far off foreign land with a citizenship that guarantees life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness including a handsome package of social welfare benefits.

Finally, I am in full agreement with Mr. Chowdhury about the politicians being fiercely engaged in nothing but power-mongering.

Shamsher Chowdhury
On e-mail

Introduction of RAB

Being a foreign national living and working in Bangladesh I would like to thank the BNP led government for taking such a bold step of introducing RAB to improve the overall law and order situation in the country. If RAB continues to carry out their duties with care and professionalism, then it can only enhance the credibility of the current administration to everyone in Bangladesh and abroad. In order to do this RAB must receive the necessary support and mandate from the government to go after all the criminal elements which exist in this society. It is the duty of the government to establish the rule of law because I sincerely believe that no one is above the law. The

policy should be Zero Tolerance like that of western countries when it comes to anti-social activities.

I love this country and like everyone else it is my right to live in a peaceful and secure environment.

Zaheed
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Number one, again

Again number one in corruption. It is terrible and shameful for us, specially those who are living abroad. I am tired and exhausted after giving answers to my friends in university. They can't believe how a country becomes number one in corruption four times in a row.

Why should we be embarrassed by some unscrupulous politicians, government employees and businessmen? We must stop them.

Mahbub Murshed
London

Hijab

Those women who choose to wear the hijab signify their wish to live by the rules of Islam, and their intent to recognise themselves as contributors to the goodwill of society through their intelligence and good character. I personally know many women, who are highly educated, but have decided to wear the hijab of their own accord.

Why can't we follow them?

Tahsin Noor
Chittagong, Bangladesh

Weeding out corruption

We are all embarrassed as our country has been dubbed as the most corrupt nation in the world for the fourth time. Transparency International (TI) is a Berlin-based organisation having a local chapter engaged in observation, interviews, and data-surveys.

Japan is a homogenous society and so is Bangladesh! Climatically, Japan is frequently battered by the typhoons as Bangladesh undergoes cyclone and storms. Japan is the second largest economy in the

world with a trillion dollar foreign currency reserve. From 1991 to 2001 Japan underwent its longest period of recession and spent 500 billion dollars during the said decade to overcome the recession the government and the opposition together worked hard and finally got rid of the recession from their economic cycle. We are also having a disorder cycle!

The Planning Commission, Pay Commission, Chamber of Commerce and Industry and trade and professional associations should work individually and collectively to remove the anomalies and discrepancies in different sectors. That is how they can combat corruption.

Golam Ashraf
Baridhara, Dhaka

Slave jockeys

While living in Pakistan in the 1980's and 90's, I had heard about children being used as camel jockeys in the United Arab Emirates. It made 'headlines' when Prince Charles of England unknowingly paid a visit to one of these races where children, some of them under the age of four, were being used as jockeys. The UAE government was pressured by the international community and, in fact, it passed a law in 2002 banning the use of children as jockeys.

This past Friday, a cable sports show in the United States revealed the awful truth about camel racing in the UAE. Ansar Burney, a Pakistani human rights activist, took hidden cameras to the 'slave' camps. The children are either kidnapped or sold by their parents for under \$500. The children were from Pakistan and Bangladesh. In the shadow of the palaces of the royal family, these children are kept behind barbed wire. They are starved to keep their weight down. If they make mistakes, they are beaten and hung from the ceiling by chains. They are also sexually abused. The younger children are tied to the camel because they are too young to ride. The children often fall off and get trampled by the camels. On the

other hand, the camels enjoy the wealth of their owners. They have their own swimming pools and they are afforded the most modern health care.

I am not sure whether the Pakistan or Bangladesh government can do anything about this. Due to the economic disparity between the countries, and the fact that Pakistan and Bangladesh depend on the UAE and the Middle East for foreign exchange, I am not sure how effective the Pakistan and Bangladesh governments can be. They can, however, enforce their laws so that it becomes more difficult for the traffickers.

I feel, as human beings, it is our responsibility to 'internationalise' this issue. This will hopefully bring an end to this horrific crime. I feel we should write letters to newspapers and leaders around the world.

Mujahid Ali Rizvi
Chicago, USA

Practise what you preach

I would like draw your attention to the letter of Mr. M. Zahidul Haque (October 26, 2004) on the issue of PM's appeal to buy local products, especially clothing. There is no denying that the very existence of the local producers will be at stake without domestic patronage.

But, such an appeal will be a hollow rhetoric if it is not practised by its preachers.

Abul Kalam Shamsuddin
Canada

Cricket or circus?

Just a few days ago 20-overs

game, I am wondering what struck our cricket officials mind to start 20-over slog in our country when our cricketers are so aggressive minded that they try to hit everything out of the ground from the very beginning of a Test match, without judging anything.

Md. Shafat Imtiaz (Jaami)
Banani, Dhaka

NU's naming game

It was not that long ago it seems that I had taken the pen in many forums, including this one, to take the Awami League government to task for its ludicrous policy of naming every edifice after the first President of the Republic. Well, it seems the naming disease has survived mightily after the October 2001 changeover. This proclivity of the current government and its sycophants is all the more painful to me personally because I happen to be a life-long admirer of the late President Ziaur Rahman, his works, and his ideals. By willy nilly naming the National University and other assorted institutions after Ziaur Rahman, the BNP partisans do little but drag a martyr into controversy, a patriot into partisanship, and a hero into histrionics.

Shaheed Zia needs no cheap naming games to consecrate his memory. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln's famous address, Ziaur Rahman is too far beyond petty political gimmicks to memorialise: his lasting memorial is the multi-party democratic republic we call our own today. If his so-called followers were really serious about showing respect to his memory, they would have lived up to his motto, "Party above self but country

Taslima Nasrin
I am greatly surprised at the UNESCO award going to Taslima Nasrin for her contribution (!) to women's development in Bangladesh.

Taslima came to limelight by writing salacious articles and books having nothing to do with the development of women in this country. I don't understand how she could get an international award for her role in this respect.

Nasir Uddin Roney
Dept. Of Anthropology, University of Chittagong



cricket made its debut in Bangladesh. It was introduced in England to popularise the game among the young generation. But surprisingly right from the beginning the young generation did not accept this new form of cricket. In the September 2002 issue of "The Cricketer International" there was a letter headlined "20-over slog gets a teenage thumbs-down". Some other letters from teenagers were also published there. Let me quote from a few of them. Thirteen years old Patrick Kingsley wrote, "The 20-overs format will be scrappy and, in the long term, detrimental to the game. I am a young teenager but I still prefer the ball-by-ball detail of the five-day game". Fourteen years old John Cotton said "My friends and I are becoming increasingly annoyed with the way that people are saying 'what kids want is limited-overs cricket'. if the ECB is not careful, while trying to attract new fans they could lose just as many". And 15 years old Alistair Young's view was that, "I am not at all looking forward to it, though, and feel it will spoil cricket forever. Test matches are meant to last for five days but in a 20-over slog, batsmen will get into the habit of always hitting the ball powerfully rather than playing safe shots and this will be bad for English cricket in the future. While such is the view of kids in England, who are very much aware of both their country and the

above party". Rather they hide behind these silly naming games to hide the fact that their extreme partisan militancy in subduing legitimate dissent is slowly unraveling the fabric of the multi-party democracy that Ziaur Rahman restored to us a generation ago.

With the NU re-naming, the professional *toshamod* (flatterer) class has reached a new nadir!

Esam Sohail
Kansas City, Missouri, USA

A common threat

The situation in the present world shows that the international terrorism is a common threat to the security of peoples and states. Terrorist activities have become a regular phenomenon and are being characterised by higher and higher degrees of cruelty.

So the foremost common concern for all nations should be to root out this menace through a comprehensive and sustained effort and uniform measures.

But, it is regrettable that the notorious "double standard" by the Bush administration and a number of western countries, in reality, consists of seeking to achieve their own political interests and a position of superiority. They are using this policy of "double standard" with regard to the Chechen events. The small autonomous republic of Chechnya in the Russian Federation has long become a hub for



Spellbound in October

The air is cool, crisp and fresh. September passes into the days of October and we experience the enchanting days of autumn. It is a time for dark grey days, a night sky with stars and a very full moon with a magical glimmer. We ride bicycles down the trail. Everywhere I go, the apples have bloomed and the scent fills the air. I carry a basket of apples home and drink a glass of sweet apple cider. The air also fills with the scent of warm spices like cinnamon, giving us a sense of warmth. I make some pretty paper masks that look like decorated spectacles. It is a time of mystery and disguise. Shakespeare created many characters of women in disguise and women in different clothing. The wonderful character of Horatio makes me think about a statesman in disguise; someone who can make a better world. The candles give a soft light. I make all kinds of pretty lanterns, and the light from the lanterns glow. It is not the glaring electric lights. Mystery books are piled on my desk and I sit in an armchair to read them (especially Sherlock Holmes, Agatha Christy and the scenes of mystery in Shakespeare's plays). While I walk through the trails and paths of autumn days, the leaves dance like fairies and elves in the strong autumn wind. Far away, in the path of the forest, in the light and the shadows as I walk, I hear the rhythm and music of the hundreds of leaves beneath my feet. The harvest moon is always so bright and so full. October is a time to see hundreds of warm and bright orange pumpkins. The cold winter days will be coming, and a little bit of warmth from the sun feels wonderful. It is a time when the year is ending and the holy evening and All Souls Day, a time to pray. I will pray for the people who passed away. In autumn evenings I take the beautiful warm dresses out and wear some pretty glittering slippers and some sparkling brooches, and I go out to my garden. My friends and me, we sit down, under the moon, and we tell scary ghost stories. When I look at the evening sky and the moon, we may see some enchanting creatures such as a fairy, an elf, or a magical witch (a good witch, not a bad one). I think of supernatural creatures such as ghosts and jinns. Whatever spells imagination will cast on me, I will always remember that spells, chants, and prayer should be good and to protect us from evil and evil spirits. A spell of love, a spell of charm, a spell of magical enchantment, a spell of peace. The candles are glowing, the lanterns give a halo of light, the moon shines like a perfect round lantern. I think about better kings, queens, fathers, a ghost and a wonderful attendant lord, named Horatio. We feel the fear, we overcome the fear and light a candle; we laugh and then smile and drink a glass of sparkling sweet apple cider. The autumn night is magical and beautiful.

Estelle Mahnuma, Frauline M. Chaudhury, Gabrielle, S Sufia, Gulshan, Dhaka

My country

I am an expatriate living in Canada. But I feel for my country and Dhaka so much. Canada is socialistic democratic country. It means that Canadians value the role of capitalism but also value life more than anything else. Here education is free up to grade 12. Transports are run by local government agencies.

But my country is still lagging far behind. Maybe, the expatriates can play a role in its development. But for that to happen certain things must change in our society.

Syed Mamun Raihan
Dhaka

TI report

I was amused, though not surprised, to see that our government has "rejected" Transparency International's (TI) rating of Bangladesh as the number one corrupt nation of the world. The Awami Leagues' reaction to this dubious distinction can be stated as muted, at best; after all, it was during the AL's tenure that we reached this spot and the legacy has been successfully upheld by the present government. One need not read TI's report to find out how corrupt we are -- just take a short walk to the traffic police and any glimmer of hope will be quashed.

I have a few simple questions to our political leaders (the incumbent

as well as the opposition): Do they (our leaders) know what TI is or what kind of credibility it has in the eyes of the rest of the world? Does the word "Transparency" mean anything to our leaders? Does our leadership realise that "rejecting" the TI report without any logical basis of rejection only makes a mockery of ourselves to the international community? The right attitude should have been to pause, ponder, and have an action plan to tackle the endemic corruption. Instead, the response of our government has been typical: short on wisdom, long on rhetoric.

A Farjad Ahmed
Rajshahi House Complex, Dhaka

Price hike

Price hike is a normal issue in Bangladesh during Ramadan. Before The month began, the commerce minister had said that the prices of the necessary commodities would remain under control and there was enough supply of rice in the market. But in reality we find that the statement of the minister has not had any impact on the market.

Who are the people manipulating the market?

Taslim Hasan
Dept. of Finance and Banking, University of Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

Options for America

What are the options for America in Iraq?

Continue to kill dozens of Iraqis and sacrifice some allied soldiers every passing day or eat humble pie and leave?

It seems that the Americans won't leave so easily. That is perhaps for two reasons. One being that after spending billions of dollars and many American lives they just cannot be defeated by the resistance in Iraq. The second and perhaps the most important being the perceived threat that they face from the 'terrorists' in Iraq. That is why they cannot leave although they have captured Saddam and couldn't find the so-called WMD which in any case were cited as the main reason for going to war against Iraq.

Or perhaps it is the 'spoils

of war' that is the real reason for spending so much money and giving up so many lives?

Yet another idea is that the Americans are really out to eliminate the 'terrorists' in Iraq which are launching suicide attacks against Israel.

According to estimates within the US itself, the American demand for oil would double in 20 years' time. So if the US controls the second biggest oil reserve in Iraq, it would be pretty sweet for it.

But it all depends on how much time and money and loss of lives can the Americans bear before they achieve their aim or quit.

One remembers that the Americans sacrificed about 50,000 lives, and God knows how many lives, before they decided to quit

Vietnam. If in the process, they killed about one million Vietnamese people, then who cared!

Is it going to be the same case in Iraq?

The aplomb with which the Iraq war is justified and defended by the American administration is horrible, if nothing else.

This war would not have taken place had not the other Superpower disintegrated and left the world at the mercy of a lone Superpower.

Hats off to the Iraqis who are fighting and inflicting heavy damage. The Americans must understand that they have to live with what their government has done till the end of the world, no matter how and when the Iraqi conflict ends.

Javed
On e-mail

Why John Kerry?



PHOTO: AFP

I am not here to defend Senator Kerry or promote him as my choice for president. The two party system with electoral votes or American voters are not what excite me. Fifty percent of the population do not even participate in the elections. This makes the American democracy a hostage to special interests with money. Senators, Congressmen, and presidents are being bought and sold in the daylight with very little regard for public interests. Mass media is not any better! Media consolidations have been taking place for quite a time and media tycoons have become very powerful to push their candidates.

Lets get to the point, I do not see any relevancy of Kerry being a Senator for twenty years and his claim to presidency. Mr. Agarwalla must be aware of the fact that the US Senate is a tough place and things do not move fast as one would have wished. Contradictory bills are put together so that a Senator, who wants vote for one bill, cannot do anything because he has to support a different bill that he dislikes simultaneously. Such are the lives for typical Senators, they cannot do much there, but not because they do not want to.

If past performance or experience

should be the criteria for this election, I think Senator Kerry is a far superior candidate than President Bush. Kerry volunteered to fight in Vietnam whereas Bush was enlisted with the National Guard to avoid going to War. Kerry came back from Vietnam and had the courage to challenge the establishment for war atrocities. Needless to say that Bush was doing nothing at that time. Bush could not run the parental oil business nor could he manage the baseball team that was given to him to manage. A blank slate for Bush! For the sake of decency, nobody should raise any question beyond that point!

Kerry's Senate record may not be as good as our senator Edward Kennedy or Robert Byrd of Virginia, but he has done some first-rate work for the American war veterans. He has worked for public education reform, children's health-care and women issues. He has also fought for the environment. Even though there is no legislation that carries his name, I think Kerry is a decent man and intelligent enough to lead the free world with logic and prudence.

Dev
Boston