

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.



Child labour and MDGs

They have become the earning members of their families at a pretty young age, instead of going to school. Needless to say, all the child labourers are the victims of extreme poverty. We live in such a country where we find so many beggars and so many cars moving around simultaneously which indicates unequal distribution of resources among the people. For instance- in Brazil, their per capita GDP was higher than the per capita GDP of Kerala in India. Despite that Kerala was and is still developed for its proper distribution of wealth. If we want to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the following

steps have to be taken.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women.
4. Reduce infant and child mortality.
5. Improve maternal health.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability.
8. Develop a global partnership.

H.M. Abu Hasnat (Razib)
On e-mail

Australia.

You may be aware that Australia is the driest continent on earth with the lowest rainfall. All major cities are experiencing water shortage and they have taken different water restriction measures to change the water use pattern of households. Two such measures may be very useful for Bangladesh.

I would like to elaborate those two measures.

1. Rainwater tank: Sydney water (equivalent to Dhaka Wasa) has made it compulsory for all new households to install a 5000 litre capacity rainwater tank in every house.

They will use this water for flushing toilet, gardening plus cleaning driveway etc. In doing so pressure on consumption of main water supply will reduce by 30%, though cost of construction will increase by 5%.

The storage facility of rainwater

will also help reduce flooding of city roads due to heavy rainfall.

2. Increase tariff on scale of consumption: Wasa should consider tariff on an incremental scale based on consumption.

For more information you can visit the Sydney water website.

Shamsul Khan
Sydney, Australia

Who will be benefited?

It was a jubilant takeover on January 11, 2007, when BNP-Jamaat's plan to engineer the upcoming election was foiled. Like most of the Bangladeshi, high hope was there in my mind too, it rose even higher following the arrest and corruption charges against some of the "untouchable" criminals wearing political uniforms.

I forgot the words of wisdom "what goes up must come down". High hopes in my mind are gradually deflating like a balloon.

What we have learned from history is that colonial masters used to malign local politicians on a regular basis. What colonials learned following the 1857 mutiny was that natives were incapable of taking over power using military force alone. However, a looming threat was rising in the horizon. Natives were getting organised under political parties like the Congress Party and were increasingly demanding autonomy. For the colonial masters, the only way to fight it back was to prove that those natives were unworthy of self-rule. This, though not successful ultimately, may have lingered colonial rule and ensured drainage of resources for a longer period. Colonial masters definitely benefited from the malicious campaign against the native leaders.

As this was true of the British colonial era, things were the same during the Pakistani rule. Sher-e-Bangla had to declare the intention of retiring from politics under duress. HS Suhrawardy, was disqualified from politics by Ayub Shahi and sent

Please take note of the present situation in Pakistan:

1. Pakistan had a constitution, where the Powers of the Prime Minister and the President were "balanced". The President dismissed the governments of Ms. Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif multiple times, creating serious instability in democratic exercise, that paved the way to the military takeover.

2. After the military takeover in 1999, Gen. Musharraf executed the "minus two" theory, thereby Benazir and Nawaz Sharif were exiled.

3. After the expulsion of those two

leaders from the country, the military government sized up the two major parties (PPP and PML) by a process of reform, thereby weakening the moderate political forces in that country.

Unfortunately, following the birth of independent and the sovereign state of Bangladesh the smear-campaign continued like many colonial era legacies. This time the beneficiaries changed, the civil-military bureaucracy, created by the colonial masters to facilitate their rule, got the larger share of the pie. They consolidated control over the politicians.

While the beneficiaries of the "malign politicians" campaign have changed from the foreigners to a group of locals, the losers remained unchanged at large. The losers are the common people at large, the nation as a whole.

In today's Bangladesh the young talents express their desire to be doctors, engineers, civil servants or army officers. They don't want to be a national leader, a politician. The problem lies here, unless we can motivate our young talents to take politics as a career, we will be wandering forever for a leader like Nehru, Mahatma, or Mandela.

Zakaria Khondker
Boston, USA

Security barriers

As a resident of Road No 48, Gulshan 2, I draw your attention to the installation by the Canadian Embassy of security barriers at the front entrance and the back exit of the road. As this is a public road for which I pay municipal taxes, I am concerned that access to my own building (House 10A) on this road will be severely restricted due to the security arrangements. The matter was discussed with the CEO of Gulshan municipality who

expressed regret for the inconvenience that may be caused but explained that the matter had been approved.

Previously, this road housed the Canadian High Commission but since moving to the new quarters next to the American Embassy in Baridhara, the former building (on Road 48) has been apparently assigned as the residence of the Canadian Ambassador.

If security was not required then, why is it required now? Why as a resident should I bear the inconvenience for their security?

As a citizen of this country I believe my own rights of abode are being taken away on the flimsy grounds of providing security to a foreign emissary.

I therefore humbly request the authorities concerned to look into the matter.

Capt. Pasha Choudhury
Former Chief of Flight Safety
Biman Bangladesh Airlines

Reform issue

It is for a long time that we from abroad have been trying to draw your attention to the fact that the present government is involved in a type of reform which is primarily directed at changing leaderships in the two major parties. We have been telling you that as a result of this action, our nation may be pushed into a situation from which generations of our people may find it difficult to come out.

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The Awami League and the BNP are busy with their reform plans but what is the use, people have lost faith in both the parties. Like termite infested timber houses, the structures have crumbled down, no amount of reform would make them acceptable to people. So, we think the political parties should stop this futile exercise.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Indoor politics?

Recently, in Bangladesh, the phrase 'indoor-politics' has come in

leaders from the country, the military government sized up the two major parties (PPP and PML) by a process of reform, thereby weakening the moderate political forces in that country.

4. The empty space so created was filled by extremist ultra-rightists. Now they are so strong that they were fighting a gun battle in and around LAL-MASJID, in the heart of Pakistan's capital.

The patriotic and enlightened journalists should show us the right path.

Dr M. Hussain
On e-mail

Sheikh Hasina

American life styles are not unknown to Bangladeshis. There are couples of hundred thousand Bangladeshis living in the USA. Almost every American man and woman work and take care of their own business including household works by themselves. Only a handful of people might have nannies and/or part-time maids. The concept of having maids is totally absent in this society.

All Americans are coping with the challenges between work and family. We Bangladeshis living in the USA are doing the same. So it shouldn't be different for AL chief Sheikh Hasina's daughter.

Actually, whenever Sheikh Hasina gets tired of calling general strike and of politics she tries to escape and have some days off relaxing in the USA and England. It does not matter to her whether people suffer or not.

No one denies the fact that Sheikh Hasina is also a mother. But there is a problem when we see our honorable former Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition staying out of the country month after month ignoring everything. If you are a mother, be a mother and stay out of politics. No one will bother you. Once you are the leader, your first and foremost responsibility is the people you represent. Leave one or the other. There is a term called retirement.

Mamun Ahmed
Las Vegas, NV, USA

What an irony!

Everyone within Bangladesh and overseas was extremely happy over the takeover of the Interim Caretaker Government backed by the armed forces. But as the days are passing by doubts are growing about the neutrality of the caretaker government.

It is an irony that we see valiant freedom fighters being thrown into jail, whereas the collaborators and killers are still thriving.

Abdul Mahbub
West Pennant Hills
Sydney, Australia

Wishful thinking

How happy we would have been if the present caretaker government had been entrusted to take care of us as long as they could and then taken over by others like them and so on.

We are feeling secure as they are taking the right decisions, dealing sternly with the corrupt people and taking many steps which are helping the country to become prosperous.

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Nur Jahan
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Recently, in Bangladesh, the phrase 'indoor-politics' has come in

all the democratic institutions have been deliberately destroyed in the last 15 years, while the two major parties were in power. Starting from Parliament, the Election Commission, the Public Service Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission, the bureaucracy and, above all, the higher judiciary, and the list goes on.

The three pillars of the state: The Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary have been used and abused repeatedly in the name of democracy.

Those who actively participated in raping these sacrosanct institutions are today talking about reforms.

The way they are going about reforming and the urgency that they are showing about it only portray a cover-up, a means of quickly returning to their old ways. Their intent is question-

able.

The present CTG has shown us that true reforms are possible. It has done in 6 months what these so called democratic politicians could not in the past 15 years. Today, we have an active ACC, the PSC is being restructured, the Judiciary is being made independent, the EC is being made fully independent of executive control etc.

Reforms are being done. What the political parties think is not important. There is no hurry. True structural reforms will take time as the system has been so badly damaged. And the people of this country are ready to wait. When democracy returns, it should truly return for the people, by the people and of the people.

Eddie Anwar
Gulshan, Dhaka



vogue after many years of hibernation. What is indoor-politics by the way? There is no 'in or outdoor' as far as politics is concerned. The word politics is whatever it means, unless it implies something subversive to the present government's wishes. Indoor-politics means here some sort of domesticated version of politics.

There is no room for such docility in politics!

Our intellectuals, politicians, and media people are so forgetful that they seem incapable of tracing the origin of this phrase. Shafi Khan

United States

Politics of killing

The AL claims the credit for the independence of Bangladesh and hence calls Sheikh Mujib "The Father of the Nation". The BNP takes pride saying that Ziaur Rahman was the announcer of the independence of the country.

If responding to their calls Bangladeshis participated in the independence war and freed the country, and if this credit goes to them, then why they will not shoulder the responsibility of

killing people in the streets. In response to their call, after all, the activists of the parties came out with oars and sticks and killed their rivals brutally.

The leaders of all the parties participating in these actions, including those who use religion as their main weapon, must be brought to justice.

Habib Aman
On e-mail

Independence of the EC



According to the constitution of Bangladesh the Election Commission shall be independent in the exercise of its functions and subject only to the constitution and any other law (Article-118(4)). But it is a hoax. In reality the EC secretariat is attached to the office of the prime minister. As a result, the EC has no absolute control over the secretariat and its staff as well.

Boundless power of the returning officer (Deputy Commissioner) and interference of the executive organ hamper its independence.

Returning officers are mainly responsible for publishing election results. But we have seen that they were influenced by the incumbent government and political parties.

In the broader national interest, independence of the Election Commission should be ensured in the true sense. Moreover, for holding free, fair and credible elections the independence of the EC is indispensable. In this connection, I would like to thank the present caretaker government that finally they have initiated the process of separating the EC secretariat from the PMO.

Shaila Solaiman
Jahangirnagar University
Campus
Savar, Dhaka

The minus-plus game

For the last couple of months the 'minus two / three' & recently 'minus them all' suggestions from politically conscious and concerned persons are being expressed in connection with the reform of the political parties largely responsible for ruining the country. I think everyone who read the 'Minus them all' article of Mr. Badrul Ahsan published in The Daily Star recently will extend unqualified support to his comments, since the people will not accept any mediocrity on reform.

All the newspapers & talk shows on TV channels are highlighting this interesting matter of minus plus doctrine. The CTG is remaining behind the scene but it is understood that some sections of the big political parties are getting positive signals from it. We strongly believe the present CTG is really working for the people and will encourage and accept the effective and meaningful reform of the bigger politi-

cal parties. Every day some big fishes are being convicted for corruption that are adding (plus result) to the numbers of prisoners. Once I wrote a letter captioned "Monument of Corruption". That time I, like others, could not imagine the magnitude of the corruption that is being unearthed every day. The government can now think of establishing some industries with the forfeited wealth of these corrupt people whose numbers seem to be uncountable. These earmarked "Industrial Units" can be manned by the prisoners and the income will go to the state funds.

The CTG has a limited time to do many things for the country & the people. So it should not overburden itself with low impact matters like running after the criminals who keep unauthorised red liquid, possess double passports or even small firearms. The question of human rights violation has come up recently for the arrest of wives & children of some

Zafar Nizam
Uttara, Dhaka

Civil servants and farmers

I feel conscience-bound to write a few lines about the incident at Nachole.

Unruly farmers ransacked the UNO office leaving the UNO seriously injured. As reported widely in different

dailies, the UNO physically assaulted his junior colleagues; earlier he had assaulted public leaders and farmers. May I ask a simple question? Can a civil servant do anything

like that? Isn't there enough training and lessons at PATC for maintaining a cool brain while dealing with public affairs?

Anonymous
Canada

