



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.

Party registration

There is enough evidence in the news presented by the media today that the date of registration of the political parties would be extended. The next question is: whether the date of election would be fixed and extended by a couple of months. Yes, the reason is the BNP. They have not found sufficient time to stabilize their party discipline until the chairperson was freed from custody. The "king's parties" are loudly asking for extension to rebuild their party strength and finalise the coalition partners. The comment of the AL chief in London has indication of change in the election date.

The government is perhaps soliciting support of a big political party to decide on the issue. They are also not yet through their political design.

The movement and comment of the government's spokesperson indicate the status of the progress of negotiation of their political deal with political parties.

If we listen carefully, we will find huge complaints about the government's failure in all aspects of governance.

The attitude and reaction of the government to all these allegations demonstrate that the government had planned their political roadmap which included erratic and failed activities to linger their tenure of office until they can make the so called "1/11" a very successful and popular revolution in our political history. The other reason is to uphold the dictates and support of the mentors/think tanks of the government.

Therefore, I would like to caution our readers that politics is a dirty game. Be prepared for any eventuality including the change of the election date. The ghost upazila election is still haunting behind the general election just to fill up the blank if necessary. This is my cynical view. Looking for the brief of the government's political mouth-piece and the outcome of the meeting between the BNP and the government. If Khaleda Zia does not

lead the delegation of the BNP, be sure things are not moving smoothly. Conditions on both the sides are thorny and need more time to resolve and go for election. Election without the BNP might be a futile exercise.

Reader
One e-mail

What are they doing?

I am astonished to know that this year a renowned and about 300 year old festival is not going to be held. Yes, I am talking about the "Gurpukar mela" of Satkhira. The reason is that some terrorists have threatened to stop it. So, my question is, what are the law enforcement agencies doing?

Sharif
Halifax, Canada

BNP's structure

I have gone through the letter "BNP's structure" in 22 September '08 issue written by Dr Jamir Chowdhury. He has rightly pointed out the fallacy of democracy and governance issue.

I was also surprised the other day while watching TV news that Mr Tanvir Ahmed had proposed Khaleda Zia's lifelong chairmanship. This is clearly beyond the norms of democracy and she did not comment anything against this proposal instantly (although one day later it was rejected by Khaleda due to heavy criticism from the electronic and print media).

So I fully agree with the writer that international donors / communities must put pressure on the political parties (not only the BNP and the AL but also other parties) to practise democracy in their respective organisations (and if necessary change some party constitutions). Here I must praise the commendable work of the EC regarding the RPO-- so that automatically or in natural way the political leadership will be developed in our country (truly speaking, the current practice blocks political leadership development). As a result, we can expect better (good) democracy

and governance from the ruling party as well as opposition parties in our country.

Everybody should work in this direction (political pundits and civil society members in particular). I think dictats from the top/govt. are not acceptable to us as a nation.

The current CTG has time to do something positive for the benefit of the whole nation.

I request the CTG to think over this issue seriously and convey this message strongly to the political parties.

Nikhil Datta
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Religion and business

Business houses and socio-political organisations are putting the "Islamic sticker" with the name of their organisations. There is no reason that I can have reservation about their choice. I am looking for the rationale. I wonder what kind of thinking is there behind the idea. Is it to add Islamic value and practice into the operation of these organisations? Or, this is just "religious consumerism" and promotional activity to attract more customers and reach the target customers of services in those fields?

What I am concerned with is: how the philosophy of the "sticker" is comparable with actual performance of the organisation. Is there any parameter by which we can make an acceptable value judgment from Islamic and commercial perspectives. We can very well understand the political and sociological ideology of the "Islamic sticker", but it is really difficult to measure the impact when it comes to a business organisation. I do not know how much Islamic is Islamic banking. At least the issue is not clear to me.

For example, the banks practising Islamic banking do not call "interest", they allow share of profit to the depositors as dividend. But what about the "dividend" they receive from their business borrowers? How the "dividend" is calculated in the business house of the borrowers?

I have difficulties to accept the success of the Islamic value in those organisations simply by naming and putting a few investors from Arab countries on the Board of Management and show up in their traditional dress code. I need to know the practical implications of the same.

Those who are well informed about the operational details of Islamic banking in Bangladesh or elsewhere may kindly give the operational details when it comes to the question of borrowers and depositors. I shall be highly obliged to get an authentic response.

Reader, One e-mail

First debate

In the first presidential debate, McCain behaved like Mr. Knowall from the barracks -- overconfident and arrogant. Obama looked powerful and presidential and yet more friendly and compromising.

McCain is more like the average American, and so he may win the election!

Humayun Hye
Baridhara, Dhaka

The big two

No doubt, it will be a great achievement of the military-backed caretaker government if they succeed in bringing the two major parties to a dialogue in the greater interest of the nation.

We are looking forward to it!

Sumona Sharmin
Green Road, Dhaka

Zardari's comments

Please allow me to voice my frustration over the much publicized promiscuous behaviour the Pakistani president displayed during his meeting with the American vice-presidential hopeful Sarah Palin. If his personal remarks, unbecoming of a head of state, were not embarrassing enough for the Pakistani community settled in America, most of us are dumbfounded over the spin his party is putting in his defence; e.g. it's considered as a compliment in US.

I have lived in the US for some 20 years. During the last couple of decades, I have learned a thing or two about the American culture, so when I say the following, I speak from personal experience:

- a) Well over 50% Americans consider themselves to be morally conservatives. The party of Sarah Palin, the Republicans, pride themselves to be a party of social and moral conservatives.
- b) Had I ever passed such comments, at job or business, I would have been fired from my job, or at minimum, would have been sued for sexual-harassment.
- c) Have we already forgotten the price President Bill Clinton had to pay for his promiscuous behaviour? He was impeached for it!

I would have never asked the following, had Mr. Zardari's apologists did not put up such a morally bankrupt defence for his embarrassing antics: How would have we, and especially Mr. Zardari's apologists, reacted had a foreign dignitary passed similar chauvinistic remarks against a female leader of Pakistan?

Adnan Gill
Los Angeles, USA

Hon'ble Chief Adviser

I am observing from here that you are trying your best to bring positive changes in the socio-economic condition of Bangladesh, after assuming the responsibility of the Chief Adviser. Now you have very limited time in hand.

Bangladesh needs three fundamental institutional reforms: a) 3 new divisions i.e. Rangpur, Mymensingh and Comilla. b) Bicameral parliament for democratic governance and c) productive and responsible national pay structure.

This is a non-political reform that will bring qualitative change in the political, economic, social and cultural institutions in Bangladesh. It will also ensure rapid political, economic, social and cultural development of the people.

Ahsanul Karim
Graduate student
University of Texas at Dallas
(UTD)

Restaurants at Cox's Bazar

We, the Cox's Bazar beach lovers, are shocked to learn that the Directorate of Environment has issued letters to three renowned beach restaurants--Angel Drop, Sweety's Finger and Tropicana alleging that they are polluting the environment and asked them to remove the structures.

These three restaurants have not only beautified the place but are also a source of inspiration and relaxation for the beach goers. A good number of people both from within the country and abroad visit Cox's Bazar to see the wooden

Colonial impact on education

The people who believe that we are free from every kind of colonial influence are not being realistic.

Though we have got our liberation, intellectually or mentally, we are still dominated by the colonial doctrines.

It is a sad truth that our students are eager to acquire their higher degree to become so-called most obedient servants. I think such kind of phenomenon is the hallmark of colonialism.

Readers, now I am going to show an example so that you can easily see the problem. In Bangladesh, at the secondary level our students usually learn a common term "Sir, I beg most respectfully to state" in the application. That means our forefathers used to beg. We are still beggars!

Since the time of British rule, till now, our entire education system has been manipulated for the sake of colonial interest. Perhaps, due to this utilitarian and colonial tenet, we see that our students are interested to read some specific subjects.

Henry Cardinal Newman puts a lot of emphasis on "Liberal Education" in his famous prose named "The Idea of a University".

Yes, the aim of a university is neither to create faithful and dutiful servants, nor to make high-handed bureaucrats. Education must aim to create better, perfect and illuminated human beings.

Well, I am not opposed to the technical or market based education. Rather, I would like to say that a university stu-

dent should be illuminated with native culture besides his professional skills. It is a common phenomenon that our students are going abroad. After departing the motherland they feel a kind of alienation. So, they don't feel enthused to return to the native country. I think this is happening due to lack of liberal education.

Readers, I would like to draw your attention to our "Madrasha" education. In the past, British rulers highly patronized "Madrasha" education for their own sake. But, in reality the "Madrasha" students are deprived of many things. Although, British people were accustomed to religious conflicts (i.e. The Protestant and Catholic conflict, Methodist movement, Reformation,

etc), they used to represent our sub-continental religions and culture on the basis of their interest.

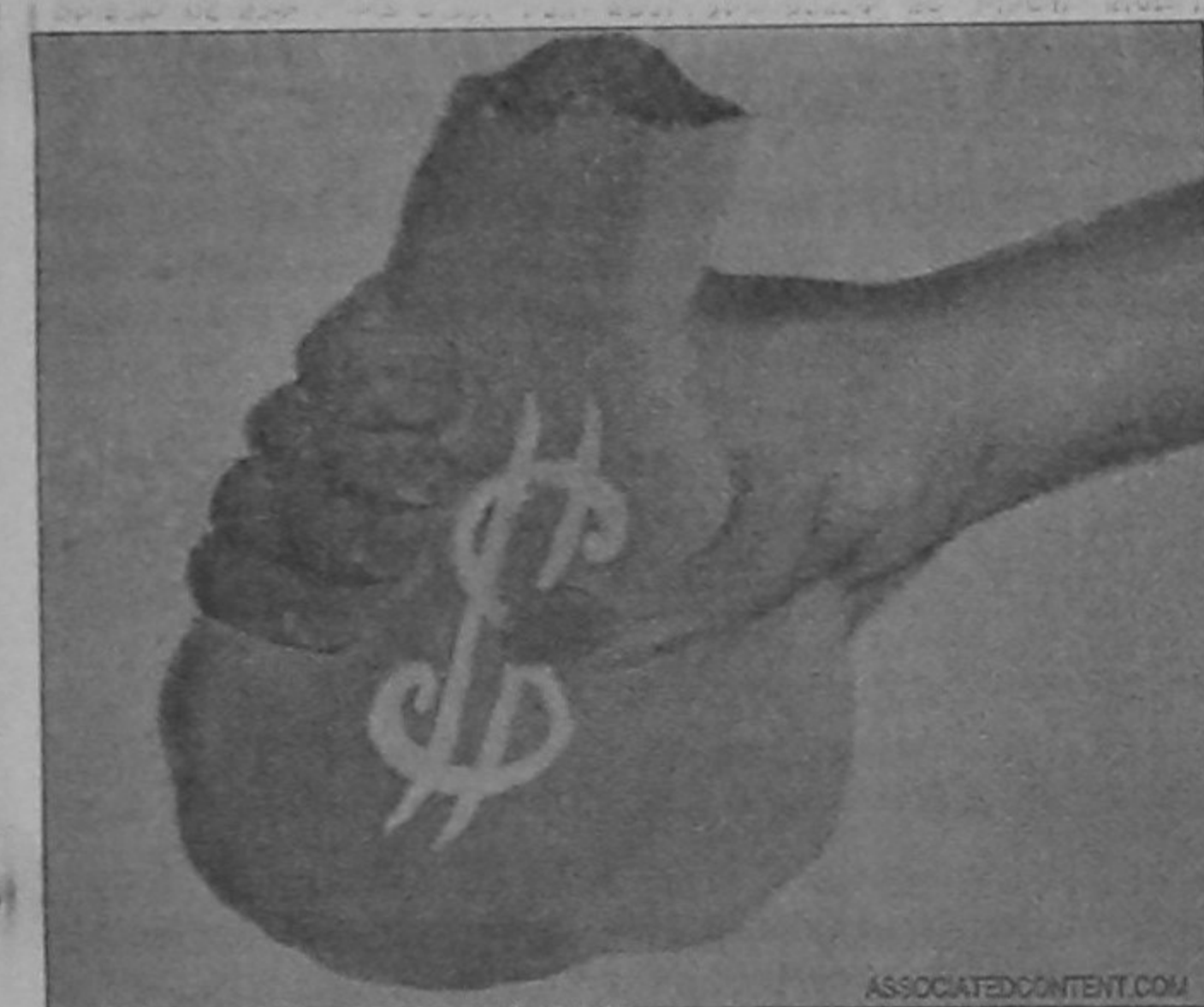
So, under the control of colonial power, it is not possible to be liberal and to practise our own culture. See, our TV advertisements, "If a girl has fair skin, she will be able to obtain a good job". That means the girl having dark skin may not get any job or dark skin is the symbol of ugliness!

Actually, we are imprisoned by some invisible colonial customs. So, at first we should reach the bottom of the problem. This is high time to think about it.

Aiman Bin Shaofiqul Hamid
Dept. of English
International Islamic University
Chittagong



Free market economy



Economists all around the world would agree that free market has become a cliché in today's world. Today, free market is a blended version of capitalism's perfect market competition and government monitoring don't confuse that; we call it mixed economy. However, whenever a third world government plays regulatory role our "development partners" still mischievously use this concept as a tool to suggest that "laissez-faire" (which means market mechanism bypassing government participation) is the best way to go about operating market. "Customer sovereignty", "better regional market balance" and "effectiveness of private capital management" --these are the very old pretexts that have been shown behind their prescriptions and not very surprisingly been duly carried out by our somewhat "spineless" governments of the third world (or more specifically LDCs) despite strong and spirited protest from local economists.

But that's only the beginning! Very surprisingly and suspiciously these institutions stay tight lipped when world's bigger economies opt for subsidy in agriculture. Whereas these organisations, "development partners", ought to work for the improvement of less privileged ones, it seems that their stakeholders are in fact the bigwigs.

Tragically, now when the bigger economies' private sectors are facing the music, it seems the governments will come up with tax breaks, bailouts blah blah... I am not saying that to overcome the recession, more precisely the credit crunch, this is an inappropriate approach.

Actually, what it proves is that both the private sector and the government are two key players in market management.

So, our "development partners", please don't come up with the absurd idea of "Free market economy" excluding any government act other than watchdogging. The government actually has a hell of a lot work to do-- especially in health care, education, staple food marketing and distribution. We saw what catastrophe an oligopoly or syndicate can bring in market. Now is the time for the government to break the silence, speak out and pontificate to our "development partners" where really is their free market model functioning.

Aubhishek Zaman
Dhaka University student
Baromaghbar, Dhaka

Why this intolerance?



We know that since the beginning of the Pakistani era, the act of breaking the images of the Hindu goddesses and defiling their places of worship has been the favourite pastime of some people. It happened last year despite the Rab deployment (we shall not talk about the years of the 4 party alliance rule when those acts were rampant) and it has happened this year.

We can understand it when a madmen in a fit of insanity breaks into the mandap and shatters the pratima heads in a remote village, away from the reach of the law enforcers.

However, when such examples of intolerance are witnessed in a place like Gulshan, we really have reasons to be worried. The Gulshan residents wanted to hold a puja in the Gulshan playground this year. Though approved by Rajuk, it was denied by the DCC. The reason given for the denial was that the venue was too close to the Azad mosque. I would like to pose the mayor this question-- does he know of one, just one, minority citizen of this country who will commit the suicidal act of playing the dhak near a mosque?

In the world of this century, let us no longer bury our heads in the sands. Let religion be where it belongs--in the heart of the individual.

Torab Hossain
Gulshan, Dhaka

otic scene at the gates is gone. Everything is being run in an orderly manner and appears to be disciplined.

The entire area offers a decent look. The officials are courteous and friendly. It's a huge change from the past. I would like to congratulate the caretaker government for addressing the grievances of the people.

Hope we can maintain the order and discipline.

Shamim Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka

"Half the cabinet abroad"

What could be more important news for this impoverished nation than the above? How else to serve the nation better? What else could be the best way of spending our hard earned forex, primarily earned through the remittances of our expatriate poor labourers? Coming to power our leaders get mad to visit foreign countries at state cost, not realising how dearly it costs the nation. The nation bleeds.

But no one should dispute or question the recent visit of our CA accompanied by his foreign adviser to the UNGA at New York. It was of course an international as well as a national requirement. But what about the other visits?

May we hope future political governments will stop such misuse and abuse of our forex and will utilise every penny for national development, after all our forex reserves determine our financial strength.

A.B. Mohammed Zakaria
Stanwell, Staines
Middlesex
UK

Sexual harassment by teachers

The incidents of sexual harassment (of students by teachers) in Rajshahi, Dhaka, BUET, Jahangirnagar and other universities have occurred over the decades, reminding us how little we have done to ensure the security of female students on campus.

The students and the Civil Society are now trying to force the authorities to make stringent rules to prevent this type of incidents. But the authorities seem to be acting otherwise. A recent news item shows that a convicted professor guilty of sexual harassment has been rewarded by the authorities.

Tainted persons should not be selected for even symbolic national positions. The issue should be taken socially and the culprits must be cornered.

Maheen Zakariah Khan
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Ex-student of BUET