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A burning issue



Melamine is being detected in imported milk. The departments concerned, importers, traders and testing institutions are engaged in heated debate claiming their tests as true and correct. The government was rather hesitant at the beginning in dealing with the matter. Now the matter is in the court, awaiting test results from overseas.

Time and again we the general people have suffered due to the government's incompetence. Companies are persuading mothers at school claiming their brands as the best one, offering gifts and other sales promotional materials free of cost.

Our import policy order clearly stipulates that in case of import of food items, the exporting country must issue a certificate stating, "Food is Fit For Human Consumption". On the other hand, pre-shipment inspection agencies are also issuing relevant certificates stating different parameters of the product. Atomic Energy Commission is also issuing certificates for imported milk showing radiation results prior to clearance of consignments from ports. So we can see so many authorities concerned about general people's health!

My humble appeal to the relevant authorities, please save our soul and do something positive so that we can get rid of such controversies. Parameters of testing results can be made more detailed through an amendment, irrespective of showing radiation results only in the relevant certificate as "Fit for Human Consumption".

We should not allow multinational and other importers to play with our children's physical well-being any more. The government should concentrate more on such issues, instead of wasting time on less important matters.

Md. Nizamuddin
Mirpur-1, Dhaka

AIDS spreading fast

The epidemics in many countries of South Asia are now entering a new phase. One of the first populations to be affected by HIV in South Asia were injecting drug users. In areas where drug injection has been long established, such as Manipur in north-eastern India, HIV prevalence rates of over 40 percent have been recorded for several years. Several hundred thousand people infected during the explosive start of epidemics are becoming ill and undergoing treatment. The treatment of infections becomes a great burden for the country concerned, because HIV/AIDS requires long-term and effective medical care, periodical hospital-based care and trained manpower to provide comprehensive healthcare services. For countries where resources are scarce, easy access to treatment and care remain very difficult and prohibitive for many PLWHAs. (People Living with HIV/AIDS)

Globally, more or less 40 million people are infected with HIV/AIDS. Every day 14,000 people are getting infected and 6,000 are young men and women; approximately 95% live in severely resource-constrained settings. In 2005, there were 4.9 million new infections.

Sometimes poverty facilitates the spread of HIV/AIDS, but equally HIV/AIDS affects poverty. Generalizing HIV/AIDS into a problem of poverty will paralyse an effective and specific response to it. By nature of the population it affects, the economic and developmental impact of HIV/AIDS is likely to be much greater than that of other major infectious or deadly diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, diarrhoea etc.

Sex workers may be an at-risk population with circumstances and motivations that differ from other high-risk people.

Bangladesh has a high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases, particularly among commercial sex workers; there are injection drug users and sex workers all over the country and low condom use in the general population. So HIV prevention research is particularly important for Bangladesh.

Mohammad Khairul Alam
AIDS Researcher
Dhaka

Story of a freedom fighter

People who sacrificed a lot during our liberation war are the freedom fighters. Perhaps, we are going to forget them. Our upcoming generation may remain in the dark on this issue.

A few days ago, I went to my native village. Before reaching my home, I went to the rented house of a freedom fighter, he has no house of his own. Mr. Ranjit Kumar, a freedom fighter of Daudkandi in Comilla sector, is my friend's father. Earlier, I heard he had been struggling to attain a degree of solvency. When he had nothing to do but pull a rickshaw, he fortunately got the job of supervisor of a bus service company. But he was not lucky. A couple weeks ago, he was injured in a bus accident while serving as supervisor. Nobody came to help him, not even the bus owner.

He is a helpless man today. Who will look after this brave man who did so much for the country?

Mohaan Masud
BBA
University of Dhaka

Will they play better?

Nowadays cricket is the most popular game in our country. Although cricket is an old game and our cricketers have been playing for a long time, still their performance is not good. As far as I know, there are all sorts of facilities available, then why do our cricketers perform so poorly in comparison to any other Test playing country? Our national cricketers never go through any financial crisis.

Only cricket has brought these cricketers to this position. After being defeated in any match our cricketers usually talk about better performance in future.

We cherish that our team will be one of the best. But their frequent failures always disappoint us. Yet, we are hopeful that our dream will come true one day. Is ICL the beginning of a new era?

Swarup Saha
Department of Business Administration
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Sylhet

Gifts

It has become a custom among people to give valuable gifts. There is no reason to worry about the rich, but the middle and low income people face a big trouble.

We should think more about our less affluent friends and relatives than nice gifts.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Traffic congestion

In Dhaka city traffic congestion is a common phenomenon. City dwellers are facing this problem on regular basis.

The planners should address the issue in right earnest.

Hasina akter Shekha
Nayapattan
Dhaka

Jamaat's activities

The Jamaat has a large number of clandestine activities that distinguish it from other political parties. The party has its own economy that consists of banks, shops, factories and even print and electronic media. It has infiltrated its cadres into various government organisations such as the civil service, the judiciary, and even educational institutions such as cadet colleges! I know of a case where a Jamaat member got a job in BUET but he was ordered by the party to join the BCS. No other political party resorts to such activities. The Jamaat economy can be termed as an economy within the economy of Bangladesh and its organisation a state within the state of Bangladesh. Their clandestine activities are a threat to democracy and human rights. Moreover, due to their clandestine activities and their wrong interpretation of Islam, they are portraying Islam in a negative manner. Also a political party should not monopolize Islam or any other religion. This is wrong and dangerous particularly in a country where there are a large number of uneducated poverty stricken people. It also places the regular political parties at a disadvantage.

Therefore, I would like to request the BNP to sever its relations with the Jamaat. I also urge the Jamaat to redefine themselves as a religious party that may assist the government/political parties in implementation of religious teachings.

Farad
Dhaka

Religion in US election campaign

It is surprising and contradicting how many of the media people and even general members of the public in the USA are trying to justify that Mr. Obama is not a Muslim and he never was and, on the other hand, how many are trying to establish that Mr. McCain's adopted daughter is not raised as a Muslim, even though both of them have Islamic backgrounds. These media outlets and citizens of a civilised nation are trying to confirm that they are not against Islam, rather against extremist Islam. At the same time, it seems from their propaganda that being a Muslim or even being in contact with Islam in any way is a crime!

It reminds us of the notion which was very much present in earlier history of the USA against Jews which took decades to overcome. I appreciate Mr. Obama's stand on this issue when he gave a statement on Internet saying that he was a Christian but he had respect for the Islamic faith and religion.

Mufassil MM Islam
Human Rights Advocate
President and CEO
Law Offices of Islam and Associates International
UK

Oil prices

For the first time in the history of Bangladesh, the price of something which went up has come down! It is a welcome development. Though the oil price has come down by 10 percent, I don't think it will have any positive impact on the national economy.

When prices of oil are falling continuously, none of the IMF, World Bank or ADB representatives is telling the government of Bangladesh to reduce the prices of petroleum.

The authorities concerned should wake up and remember that the majority of the people (90 percent) are suffering due to the adverse effect of oil price hike.

We want the government to reduce the oil price substantially.

Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

America's turn to vote

There is every indication that Democratic nominee Barack Obama will become the next US President. He is favoured over McCain, he has got all the qualities a president should have—a very impressive person indeed.

If in spite of all these Obama is defeated, it will prove that Americans are racists.

Nur Jahan, Chittagong

Mobile abuse

Nowadays people cannot think of life without mobile communication, even for a moment. Mobile companies (multinational) have a booming business in Bangladesh. Updated mobile technologies keep coming one after another. The mobile companies have adopted some business policies to attract youngsters. Mobile phone has brought a radical change to our information and communication systems in Bangladesh. A person can enjoy internet, audio, video, MP3 player, games, recording, video, picture and so many multi-purpose systems in a mobile phone.

It is a matter of great regret that millions of youngsters are attracted to misuse of the device. They are wasting their valuable time. We hope the situation will soon change for the better.

M.Z. Haider
Ghorashal, Narsingdi

Assam bomb blasts

It is definitely horrifying and alarming news for us that Assam is now the new target of terrorists. It is hard to tell which group is responsible for this massacre but there is no doubt that they are now targeting the areas which were not their target before and the security systems appear to be a bit lax. So the Indian government should have a strong anti-terrorism system in place, so that this kind of crimes cannot be committed in future.

The terrorist activities in our country were quite successfully contained by our army, Rab and police.

Our law enforcers should remain alert. The terrorists who are responsible for Assam bomb blasts may use Bangladeshi soil for shelter. This must not be allowed.

Mir Abidur Rahman
Department of English
South-East University

Airport duty

I am a Bangladeshi studying in Malaysia. I will be finishing my course soon, so I will be going back to Dhaka.

I have bought a lot of electronic goods from Malaysia, but now the problem I am facing is the airport duty on those. For example, I bought a DVD player which I bought for only Tk 2,000 but the duty on DVD players is Tk 4,000. I feel that this is not logical, as these are very cheap in Bangladesh also.

The amount of duty should be based on the market price of the products. I think that the amount of duty that the customs collects is way back dated and must be revised.

Fahmi Al Mahmood
One-mail

Our unpredictable players

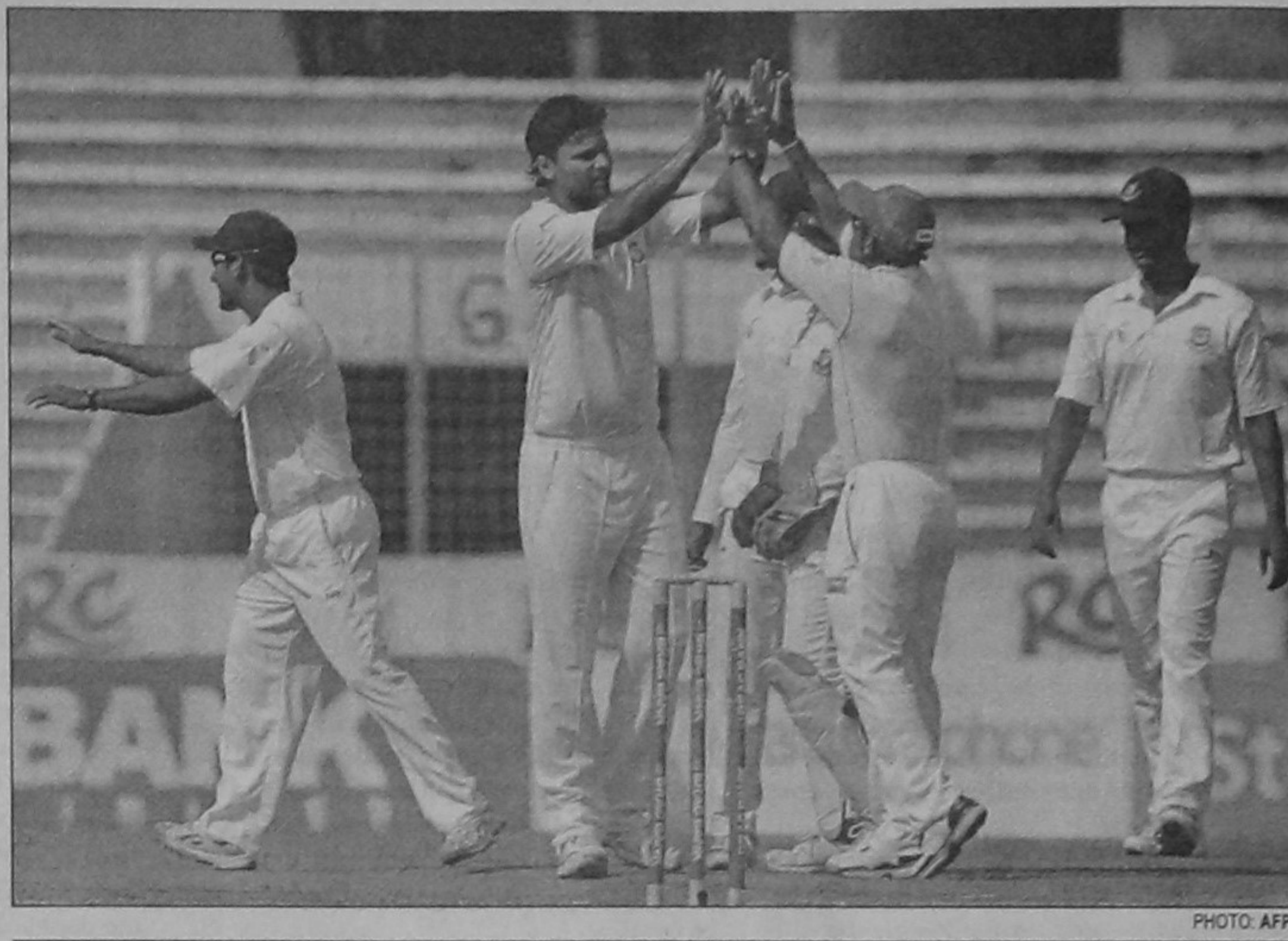
Bangladesh cricket team continues to play unpredictably. A few wins against Pakistan, Australia, India, New Zealand etc. worked as tonic and magic for the team and the whole country. It seems to have satisfied their appetite for the 'kill'. It bolstered the morale and confidence of the team for the time being. Then they became complacent and performed poorly. So, we are yet to get our money's worth in terms of expenditure, electric bill and time consumed for watching cricket.

Previously, most of the players were Dhaka boys coming from educated middle class or upper middle class families. They were not professionals in the real sense. Now they have become selectors, managers etc. I wonder if there is any communication and confidence gap between the players and the officials. This

may hamper the performance of the players. The performance of the present team is much superior to those players playing in late Pakistan and early Bangladesh days. They are technically better than their predecessors. Sukumar (Narayanan), Latif, Dulu Affendi (Narayanan), Daulattuzaman, Altaf Hossain, Hira, Tanna, Raqibul, Ayaz, Neaz Mohammad and others used to play East Pakistan club cricket and early Bangladesh cricket.

There have been many changes in the selectors and officials in the last few years. As a cricket lover, I would urge upon the authorities concerned to look into the 'rapport building' factor between the players and officials. We wish the team all success. Entertain the viewers and play to our money's worth!

SN Mamoon
One-mail



Melamine in milk

Melamine is a nitrogen rich white crystalline compound added to milk powder by dishonest producers to give fake appearance of higher level of protein. This compound in milk has adverse effect on renal system, particularly of children as reported in China and other parts of the world.

Bangladesh has to import more than forty thousand tons of milk powder and the presence of melamine in some imported milk brands has created panic among the people.

Prohibiting sale of such contaminated milk caused scarcity in milk supply and reduced dairy product business substantially.

Bangladesh has the potential to produce enough milk from cow, buffalo and goat. We need a white revolution through a pragmatic policy and action programme for the production and distribution of sufficient quantity of milk and its products under strict monitoring and testing. This revolution will improve our health and nutrition due to self sufficiency in milk, save foreign exchange, generate employment, promote dairy business, and provide organic manure for soil fertility, besides other intangible benefits.

S.M. Monowar Hossain
Lalmatia, Dhaka

Brazen politics

The top leaders of the two big political parties are now demanding release of those convicted/charge-sheeted for various crimes/corruption, so as to facilitate their participation in the upcoming general election and getting elected anyhow. One leader of a big party said that they would send the one to the election battlefield who would 'win' (be obviously by hook or by crook (be he a dihard criminal or corrupt)).

At the same time, they are yelling that they will establish true democracy and clean government. Don't they feel even a bit of pinch in the conscience for such downright hypocrisy? We have no words to condemn their attitude.

By the way, what are our 'progressive' brothers doing? They do not bother to call a spade a spade; but they wait for the removed 'sculpture', as if the sculpture itself would solve all our problems.

M.S. Ali
Uttara, Dhaka

Regional university

A couple of good things were heard from the UCG. The number one is, rule of ethics to stop sexual harassment of girl students in our seats of higher learning. Secondly, they won't allow any more private university in Dhaka city. These are definitely good moves and should be followed in letter and spirit.

Since we are talking about educational sector reform and development, I think it is very important to raise the issue of selection of

sites or location of the first ever Regional University for Women. Apparently, it is going to be set up in Chittagong. I seriously question the wisdom and farsightedness of the investors and the promoters, including the government.

Chittagong is the busiest port city. The city is already crowded and losing its ecological balance for one reason or the other. It is also considered our financial capital. There exist universities and colleges which need more attention in terms of physical improvement, academic standard, logistic support. Why not invest in these areas, instead of establishing the Regional University for Women there?

I hope the promoters have not forgotten that Chittagong University and other educational institutions in Chittagong are already vitiated by religious extremists. Women's education including freedom of choice and equal rights are opposed by such elements.

I cannot imagine how the women of the Regional University would escape the virulent attack of the fundamentalist groups very active in Chittagong. I understand that 25 seats would be reserved for Bangladeshi girls and rest for the regional girls students. I think it would be a nightmare for these girl students to concentrate on their academic activities.

I think there is still a chance to rethink and decide on a new site in consideration of at least two factors such as 1. Chittagong is also a crowded city and humming up with economic activities due to port facilities and other economic enterprises, 2. If Dhaka cannot have any more private university (good decision), the same applies to Chittagong also.

I have an alternate suggestion. The Rural Development Academy in Comilla has outlived its utility; I understand only routine training courses are run now. BARD has very good campus facilities. This can just be upgraded with less cost and the proposed Regional University for Women can more conveniently be located there. This might help to revive the pride of that particular campus and the students would feel more safe and enjoy their freedom without any barriers. Please rethink the issue giving up regionalism or districtism. Rural development can be a strong faculty there to continue the rural development learning academically. The legacy of the BARD would be a good guide in this respect.

Briefly speaking, my second choice is Rangamati. Please think in terms of regional development and big support for preservation of ethnic culture and inter culture development among the inmates of the proposed Regional University and local population who are in dire need of a development surge based on the regional development concept of three hill districts. In my judgment, this

would be a sound choice.

By the way, I am neither from Comilla nor Rangamati. I come from a southern district!

Areader
One-mail

To Obama...

I live 12,000 miles away from you. I will be there in spirit and so will be tens of millions of Bangladeshis supporting you. We want a complete victory for your side. We want a balanced USA with a leader who does pay serious attention to dialogue and diplomacy. Someone who understands that the fate of the USA and the rest of the world depends on 'selling peace' and not military armaments.

Someone who feels for the poor and the downtrodden; someone who has the spirit and vision to look beyond darkness and seek justice and equity. Someone who is responsible and behaves with the most sincere gestures to work with people.

We want a peace loving US president who feels for the globe and humanity.

Zia
IITM
Dhaka

Top two

There are no more obstacles in the way to participation in the elections by the two big leaders. It is a piece of news that brings great relief to us. Both the AL and the BNP, the two major parties, have vowed that without the participation of their leaders, their parties would not take part in any election.

Surely, if any one of them is absent, no credible election is possible in Bangladesh.

Naturally, the leaders of these two parties are indispensable and above everything else, including the state itself! They believe their top leaders come first and then comes their party and then the state.

After 1/11, these two leaders became too much controversial. Instead of following the honourable path like Sonia Gandhi, they have chosen the path of restoring their lost glory by using their muscle powers.

They did it knowing well that the people of this country are solidly behind them.

I am not concerned with the present. The present CTG has paved the way to hold the election with full participation of the two big parties, sacrificing all their initial dreams. We are hopeful that the long awaited election will be held on schedule.

The country will be ruled all over again by the old leaders, no matter what we have heard about their corruption or misuse of power in the past.

I am concerned about what will happen after them. We know every living being is mortal!

Shafiqul Islam
NY, US