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Congratulations, Americans

Mr. Barack Obama is now President Elect of the USA. We all congratulate him and pray for the success of his leadership to bring the needed "change". It is a historic victory for Mr. Obama and the Democratic Party. Mr. Obama has dedicated his victory to the people of America. I wholeheartedly support his dedication and confidence in people which has brought the historic victory.

In my judgment this is the victory for the American nation to leave behind and break the controversial racial barrier, once and for all. The Americans deserve highest appreciation from the freedom and democracy loving nations and people of the whole world. Mr. Obama is the messenger of peace and prosperity. He deserves active support and cooperation from the comity of nations to fulfil his dream of a prosperous and peaceful world.

It would be very unfair not to mention the leadership of Sen. McCain. He actually delivered the most befitting, emotional and heart touching conceding speech to his followers in Phoenix giving full credit to Mr. Obama. Here I find the need for the Bangladeshi politicians to learn how to achieve a democratic goal and play a responsible role for the greater good of the people who elect them to power. I hope they would learn from the conceding speech of Sen. McCain.

Lots of discussions are going on in Bangladesh regarding the possible impact of the US election on Bangladesh. I firmly believe that under Mr. Obama's presidency democracy will be strengthened all over the world.

A reader
One-mail

Barack Obama became the 44th President of the USA, an African - American to the highest office. History has been made and it was possible because of the people of America who gave real meaning to the slogans, 'Yes, we can' and 'Change we need'.

It is a dream come true, though people of other countries could not vote it was almost like the election being held in their countries also.

People all over the world prayed for Obama because he seems to be a person who will not be indifferent to other countries. As a superpower America has got hold around the world, we hope and trust that Barack Obama will do his utmost to bring peace and stability in the turbulent regions, his power will be used for the welfare of humankind, in his eyes all the people will be equal, he will be kind, just and understanding.

We hope he will be a great president and at the same time a humble human being. We wish Barack Obama a successful presidency, may he live long and serve the distressed people all over the world with compassion.

Nur Jahan
Khaled Road
Chittagong

Congratulations to Americans for understanding the need of this century and honouring the global demand for peace. Congratulations that they have elected Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States of America. Congratulations go to Barack Obama, all peace loving world leaders and people of the globe for their continuous and painful



efforts to bring changes. This is a message for all of us that whatever may be our colour, race, sex, class, religion, we are all human beings and should be respected equally. It is a victory against all forms of extremism.

People wanted change and restoration of Human Dignity that they lost when election rigging took place in the USA in 2000. The election of 2008 is no doubt a strong message to all of us who love peace and continuity of human civilization on the planet

and that no one should undermine any religious group and should not act against humanity.

The damage and loss of trust caused by the Bush administration and his two other close associates, Tony Blair and John Howard, are now on the way to repair. Since 1945 people from South, East and North trusted Americans and the West. However, this has been totally damaged by the Republicans' thrust for world power. We the Muslims and Blacks lived under threat for the last 8 years. The Americans realized that if they do not trust others, then no one is going to trust them.

Bangladesh should take a lesson from this victory. We have to do many things for the minority community. We must respect their belief and culture and should not undermine their dignity. We the majority should not act in the way the BNP-JAMAAT did in October 2001.

Islam does not believe in extremism.
Farid Ahmed
PhD Researcher on Justice and Good Governance
Melbourne University, Australia

The problem of the USA and to a large extent that of the world now rests on the shoulders of the 44th President Elect Barack Obama. A poignant cry from the Indo-European family of civilisations (which includes Bangladesh) would be 'O-Baba- Ma' for the rescue of 'orphans, have-nots and the downtrodden'.

I hope the proverb, "Anyone who goes to Lanka becomes Ravana" will not be true in his case.
Engineer Shafi Ahmed
London, UK

UN and Bangladesh

Overall, being a nation with the proverbial beggar bowl we have possibly no choice, but to listen to whatever is said, and accept whatever is done.

Even now officials from many foreign countries talk to us about how to manage a democracy.

We may be politically free, but economically we are totally dependent on aid and soft loans from the UN and other international agencies and friendly governments.

This very clearly indicates that becoming economically viable and independent should be our only clear-cut goal and nothing else, if we want to be really independent. There is NO other choice for Bangladesh. Unfortunately for



Bangladesh, given the continuous political bickering, no government can come out of the prevailing poverty trap. Do our politicians realise the crucial importance of achieving economic freedom? I doubt, given our political direction over the last 35 years!
S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Press and our freedom

I am not flattering but the only hope or, the last hope, for the countrymen is the PRESS. It is also heartening to note that the senior journalists had discharged their responsibilities with utmost care, sincerity, upholding the respectability and responsibility of the press. They have also denounced yellow journalism, that has prevented the wrong doers from taking refuge to immoral journalism. Bangladesh Press has a laudable role in discharging responsibilities, and has earned Respect and Trust of the people where it matters.

We are shocked to see the news on Mr. Mujahid, the Secy. Gen. of the Jamaat-e-Islam. We have no

complaint against Mr. Mujahid but we have a "Question" to place before the CA, and, his govt--under what law of the country a "Fugitive" (as per police version) could meet the CA and his cabinet members? If you think very carefully, it has left a "precedence" that law does not go its own way. It can be moulded, tampered, and used to the suitability of the person/s, or the group concerned. This is a dangerous phenomenon and I am very frustrated.

Will the govt kindly let the countrymen know whether Mr. Mujahid's presence in the meeting had any legal basis? That would console us that the country can do no wrong, the individual may.
Tayab-ul-Huq
Uttara, Dhaka

BTV news

I am watching BTV for the last few years. I think they don't have the accountability for the tax payers' money they are spending. As if they are serving other countries and cultures, I am afraid. Let me clarify my position.

News is mostly on "tape cutters and inauguration ceremonies and personalities and their charisma." Real problems of economic and social black holes are ignored in BTV. Agriculture news or Krishi Shangbad in the middle of the news is so good-- as if Bangladeshi agriculture is "booming."

All stakeholders should be responsible and all news and information important to the nation should be analysed. Hiding the real situation amounts to corruption.

Dr. Azizul Karim
GP, Australia

Government projects

A major part of the government's functioning is focused on implementation of its projects. From the yearly revenue collection, expenditure on establishment & operation is met, the amount left is spent on project implementation. Any amount left thereafter goes for reserve. In certain years when revenue collection is not enough, money has to be transferred from the reserve or loan is taken from banks for project implementation. A surplus budget is essential for ensuring good governance.

In a year of deficit budget, the extra money spent to implement some important projects can also be adjusted from the surplus money in the following years. But if deficit budget continues, it can be understood that the country is under imprudent leadership; as a result, citizens are getting indebted

to the tune of thousands of crores of taka unknowingly. Any new project taken by the government in such condition is from ulterior motive and is anti-people.

The government has implemented some development projects financed by foreign loan. But many of those projects give no benefit; however, the money spent with interest adds to our national debt. Since 1994, the government is taking loans from the local banks, to implement development projects. With the internal and external loans added together, the national debt has crossed 2 trillion crores taka by June 2006 (UNDP Report, August, 2008). The figure became much higher by June 2008. So, the new projects being taken & implemented by the government are not serving us well.

It needs no proof that many projects implemented so far were anti-people. Those projects uprooted poor people from their homes; but the criminals got rich becoming contractors, and the politicians & officials became owners of cars, flats & properties. Many of those projects are traceless and are a colossal burden on the people. Shrewd politicians, inefficient consultants & greedy officials are responsible for proposing & implementing those projects.

If a project is needed in public interest, the responsible field officer shall propose it. A project is definitely anti-people when it enters the Ministry being promoted by an interest group. This group can be politicians or bureaucrats or the investors themselves. If it is promoted by ADB or World Bank, then the project serves their purpose (in most cases).

Nevertheless, the government's financing has basic flaws. If IMF, WB or ADB show interest in a project, the government jumps into it without hesitation. Most of their funds are spent in Capacity Building & Consultancy for the projects. They don't show interest in projects serving national interests.

If any project is anti-people, the bureaucracy cannot judge it. The political governments are always dependant on the bureaucracy, so they cannot do it either. The opposition never plays its due role. So whether a project is being financed and implemented in public interest or not GOES UNCHECKED. Now the situation is that people have to check these projects by themselves. We from the Patriotic People's Forum would like to work on behalf of the people in this particular area.
Engr. M Inamul Haque
Convener
Patriotic People's Forum
Free School Street, Dhaka

Polluted river

The 170km long Karnaphuli river, a major river of Bangladesh, originating in Lushai Hill and ending in the Bay of Bengal through Chittagong, is becoming alarmingly polluted.

A study has recently (2008) found that the PH level of water is 4.1 in the area near Karnafuli Paper Mills (KPM); whereas the ideal PH level is 7.5, which means the water is acidic! The acidic water poses a great danger to aquatic life.

The matter deserves immediate attention.
Rana Abbas
Geography & Environmental Study
Chittagong University

Let's wait and see

I read the article by your Assistant Editor, Zafar Sobhan, about Barack Obama. The article was "Straight Talk: Yes we can" published on 7th November 2008. He mentioned Barack Obama as being a "man of unusual thoughtfulness, judiciousness, and integrity". How has Mr. Sobhan reached this conclusion? Is he caught up with the anti-Bush rhetoric, and Obama-mania? George Bush junior was one the most bloodthirsty president America has had, thus it is not difficult to support Obama. Although this does not imply Obama will be any better.

Let's wait and see what Barack Obama does and how he handles his foreign policy, especially in relation to Palestine and Iraq. He could start at home by improving the situation of Native Americans who live in deprived 'reservations'. As for Obama's impact on Bangladesh, Mr. Sobhan is right that it will be little or negligible. Bangladesh does need good leadership. Disappointingly, I don't see it coming from the forthcoming elections in Bangladesh.

Fazle Karim Chowdhury
Barrister at Law
London, UK

No good leader!

At present, the major political parties are on the high way to election. So it's a good sign for us. But we are still in doubt whether the nation will get a team of honest and patriotic and capable leaders through the election. It is uncertain because earlier Bangladesh watched a local government election which frustrated us, as the expected changes in leadership did not take place. The caretaker government also hoped it. But without a change in voters' minds and in the political parties' selection and nomination process, no change was possible. We cannot reach our goal.

A leader is the driver of a nation. If he is honest and capable he will take his passengers to the destination. But if he is dishonest and incapable, he will fail. So no good leader, no good nation!

Md. Ruhul Amin
Dev Pahar (Noor Pahar)
College Road, Chittagong

Bio-fuel

Bangladesh is a densely populated country. More than 80% of its people live in the rural areas. Fuel demand is increasing with the increase of population. But we have not enough reserve fuel for meeting our future requirement. Any increase in oil price significantly increases production and transportation cost and price hike becomes unavoidable. It is therefore argued that poor countries like Bangladesh should explore alternative renewable energy sources that will reduce their dependency on imported oil. Many supporters of bio-fuel believe that it will be a blessing for tropical developing countries like Bangladesh because of our comparative advantages of sun and excellent energy crops.

Bio-gas, a renewable source of energy, can be used as fuel for cooking, lighting, running vehicles and generators etc.

Himel Aziz
Dept of Business Administration
Shahjalal University

CHT

We now see light at the end of the tunnel in Bangladesh in general. It is expected that the emergency rule will be eased very soon.

But we do not feel that comfortable here at the CHT. We want the CHT to be governed under the same rules as other parts of the country.
Mithun Chakma
CHT

"Obama is my president"

Just after his defeat in the election, Republican candidate John McCain congratulated Mr. Obama in a speech to his supporters gathered on the lawn of Phoenix's luxury Arizona Biltmore Hotel. In this meeting some of his frustrated fans shouted boos and cried "Bullshit!" But Mr. McCain told them firmly "Barack Obama is my president!"

Will our politicians learn something from this? We would request our politicians to maintain the culture of democracy. It will help our country to develop as a civilised nation.

Dr. Farid Majumder
Darmstadt, Germany

With Barack Obama focusing on bringing a balance between 'Wall Street' and 'Main Street', I could see Larry Summers to be named new treasury secretary. An American economist and academic (1993 recipient of the John Bates Clark medal for his work in macro economics), Larry was the secretary of the treasury for the last year and half of the Clinton administration (preceded by Bob Rubin and succeeded by Paul O'Neil). Larry (53) also served as the 27th president of Harvard University from 2001 to 2006. As a researcher his areas of expertise are public finance, labour economics, financial economics and macroeconomics. Larry is the son of two economists, both professors at the university of Pennsylvania and nephew of two Nobel laureate economists- Paul Samuelson and Kenneth Arrow. A PhD from Harvard, he taught at MIT and Harvard and was the youngest professor (at 28) at Harvard.

Let's see, what he does this time, if called to serve his country.
Mamun, Ue-mail

My salute goes to a true American who I hope will hold the bride of the foreign policy and home affairs. The time for 'Fear Politics' is over at last. My salute goes to the American people who have at last woken up to their errors in judgement and have now chosen the right man to lead. I have a dream that this man will lead the nation and the people of the world to a path where only human values are valued. I am confident that this man is the right man to usher a new dawn in the global arena with his unprecedented fusion of roots encompassing Islam, Christianity, Humanity, White and Black. Mr. Obama! You have my standing ovation and I am proud that my First Born Child is an American who can now dream to be anyone if he wishes and tries hard.

I now dream of our politicians wasting no more time on age-old conflicts and leading this mighty nation of Bengal Tigers to prosperity.

Mufassil Islam
Human Rights Advocate
UK

Dhaka Warriors' triumph

Dhaka Warriors' success and 3 straight wins will surely make our cricketers more confident in future. Their good performance in ICL will ensure entry of more players from our country in that tournament. And other teams may also hire Bangladeshi cricketers. And all over the world Twenty20 cricket will start to sponsor our cricketers.

The performance of Dhaka Warriors will also help our national team players to believe that they have the potential to perform consistently, match after match. Dhaka Warriors have made us proud.

Asifim Rahman Saikat
Engineer, Dhaka

Unkind remarks

I must protest the letter by Nur Jahan (DS, November 4, 2008) where she states that if Obama is defeated in the election, it will prove that Americans are racists. This kind of thinking is a product of a racist and narrow mindset and makes no logical sense.

Ms. Jahan is essentially saying that those who are voting for Obama are doing so because he is black. There are certain segments of the population that are using race as a litmus test, but the majority are voting for him because they see something beyond his skin colour.

Niraj Agarwalla
Longworth Ave
Boston, USA

Baul singers



Lalon Shah was a spiritual singer cum composer. When we hear a song of Lalon from Farida Parveen or any other Baul singer we get lost in a world other than this earth. Certainly, we do not understand all 'truths' of the song but we feel that the singer is trying to seek communion with the Creator through it.

Lalon loved all men, irrespective of their religious identities. He believed that all people are the creations of the same Creator.

The Baul king was simple and uneducated but surely a self-educated wise man - a philosopher. Lalon is our pride. He is part and parcel of our culture.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Needed: small park

The residents of Shaheenbag, Nakhalpara, Teskonipara and Arjotpara under Tejaon police station have very little scope to reach some open field to walk. Children are the most deprived group. So, the majority people have to spend their afternoon at home. Their rooftops are the only hope to meet the requirement. Regular exercise through sporting activities is important for both mental and physical growth of children. We think it is their civic right as well. Besides, the rates of diabetes and hypertension are significantly alarming in the city. So, walking is a must for everyone as suggested by the physicians.

In fact, there are small parks in some posh areas in the city. In view of that we request our present government to set up a small park in our area. After relocation of Tejaon airport, some areas near the Mohakhal flyover and DGDPO office are still unutilised. This area is an ideal place for a small public park. Additionally, it may be a part of beautification work of the adjacent flyover and as an entry point to Dhaka town it will give a good sight

to the foreign guests as well.

Hope the government and Dhaka Cantonment authorities will consider it sympathetically.
Engr. Zahir U. Hyder
One-mail

Unfit vehicles

Road traffic accident (RTA) is one of the major causes of death and disability in our context. And one of the important causes of RTA is unfit vehicles. They also cause air pollution. Dhaka is the most polluted city in the world. Air pollution also causes many diseases, including cancer.

Unfit vehicles increase the traffic load which is a cause of traffic jam in Dhaka city. Traffic jam reduces vehicle speed substantially. It consumes billions of dollars by burning fuel.

If the government takes proper steps against illegally run vehicles (Bus, truck, private car, tempo, taxi, CNG, rickshaw etc), traffic jam will ease in 24 hours.

If you recollect the situation after 1/11, there was no traffic jam for at least two months!
Dr. M Habibur Rahman
Green Road
Dhak



MINNIS UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS