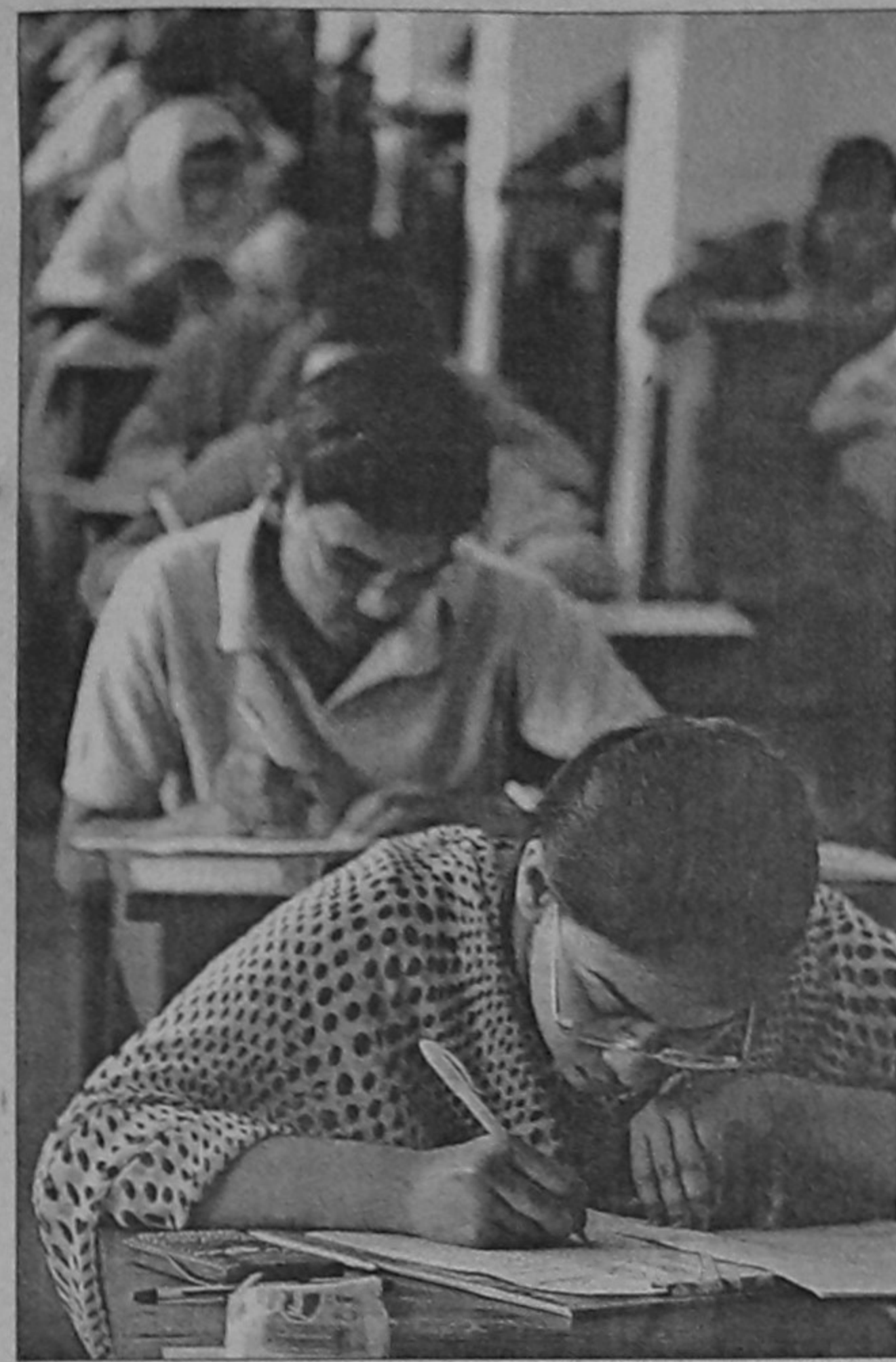


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Admission ordeal



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

It has been reported that more than four lakh students passed the HSC examination this year. Of the successful candidates 22,045 students scored GPA-5. As the number of seats in the public universities is limited many students will fail to find a seat in those institutions. To be more precise, the total number of seats in the 29 public universities is about 15,000. Where will those remaining 7045 GPA-5 holders go?

We have read about incidents of vandalism in the DU premises. It was a section of the admission seekers who took part in that shameful act. As a huge number of admission-seekers will through the university premises, any type of negligence on the part of the authorities may give rise to chaos and confusion.

Finally, one may wonder about the quality of the staggering number of GPA-5 holders. Are all of them good enough to pursue an honours course at a good university?

Zabed Wali
Pahartali, Chittagong

BNP's game plan

If from today the whole world accepts the present "East as West and West as East" the Sun from tomorrow will start rising in the West and setting in the East. The truth is, the names of directions or existence of anything that we call remain the same because names of all stars and planets are given by homo-sapiens and each member of this species call each of their names in their own languages. The objects do not change only the names do. Whatever the uncompromising leader of the BNP says is correct and there can be no change. Now she has said that no fair election is possible under this govern-

ment and the CEC because both the institutions are playing different games. According to BNP Chairperson and its SG the government and the EC are preparing different playing fields for different parties.

The BNP, in fact, needs a level playing field where the ground umpire should be someone like Justice M.A. Aziz and a voter list with lots of extra voters. Also ballot boxes should be blunt and not transparent. And only then the BNP's level playing field would be ready and it will take part in the election because, according to the leaders of this party, the BNP will not stay away if such conditions are made. Least I forget, whatever may

be the ground reality, the result sheet should be kept secret.

In Lalidighi, she complained to her supporters that the present CTG has misbehaved with her and her family members including her sons. According to her, 1/11 was created by a particular party who are now looking for a "patano" election. This she cannot allow to happen. She does not mind what happens to the people of this country or democracy. The democracy she believes is sticking to power.

I hope the present CTG and CEC would realise this fact as quickly as possible and act accordingly.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Cricketers treated shabbily

It is really unfortunate to find out the kind of shabby treatment handed out to our national cricket team by Cricket South Africa (CSA). According to media reports "Players and officials had to stay five hours in the team hotel lobby on November 2 before being checked in after a fourteen-hour journey" (DS Nov.7). And this was not the end. Further reports add that Ashraf and Razzak were kept waiting on the dais for forty-five minutes only to be informed that there would be no post-match briefing! Such negligent and irresponsible treatment that our players have received is simply unacceptable. Whenever South Africa (or any other foreign cricket team) come to Bangladesh, they always receive warm hospitality and have been well looked after by our cricket authorities.

Just because our cricket team is the underdog for this tournament does not mean that they deserve to receive such treatment.

We want a clarification from CSA authorities on the issue.

Wahed
Old DOHS, Dhaka

Sayedda Jaigirdar's 'London, 1971'

Sayedda Jaigirdar's piece "London, 1971" published in 'The Daily Star' on 18 October, 2008 made me extremely nostalgic. In this column, she mentions me also as one greeting them in London's Heathrow airport on their arrival from Nigeria with 'smiles and warm clothes' following her father Mr Mohiuddin Ahmed Jaigirdar's renunciation of Pakistan High Commission's diplomatic post of Third Secretary in Lagos to work from London for the liberation of Bangladesh under the leadership of Mr Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury.

Our provisional Mujibnagar government had earlier sent instructions to all Bengali officers and staff to resign from Pakistan government posts in foreign countries, particularly from the Pakistan missions. These Bengali members working abroad in one or another capacity with the Pakistani establishments abroad were advised to report, after their resignation, either to the government in Calcutta or to London, the second most important place in our Liberation War outside India. In 1971, Mr Mohiuddin Ahmed Jaigirdar also was following that instruction and advice of our then government.

Yes, I vividly remember that I had gone with Mr Sultan Sharif, a legendary Awami League leader in London for the last 45 years to receive Mr & Mrs. Jaigirdar and their three young children. I don't think I had with me my wife that day. Sayeeda may have made a small mistake here. This mistake is not unusual; rather, that as a child of 8 years only in 1971, she could remember so many details including our smiles and warm clothes is itself a tribute to her memory of 37 years ago.

I remember, Mr. Justice Chowdhury was not in London at that time. He had perhaps gone on a visit of Europe to mobilise support for our cause. So, the whole responsibility of receiving the Jaigirdars and accommodating them fell on me.

On receipt of the information about their arrival, I immediately contacted Sultan Sharif, one of my closest colleagues and comrades in my three and a half years' stay in London and, as expected, got fullest support; he even offered to host the family at his modest house in Balham, South London. Further, he readily agreed to accompany me to Heathrow airport in my self-driven car for the big event. This indeed was a big event, because any resignation of any Bengali officer or staff from any Pakistani mission abroad in 1971 was seen as a big blow to Yahya Khan's barbaric regime and their claim of all quiet and normal in East Pakistan.

After receiving the Jaigirdars, we immediately faced a problem; how to take them to Balham. We did not know earlier that the Jaigirdar family was that big. The Jaigirdars, Sultan Sharif and I could not all travel in my personal car, an Austin 1300. Moreover they had their luggage also. We could of course take a taxi, but that would cost three pounds; a mighty big amount in those days, more so because we were fighting a war against a ruthless Pakistani army then. We had to save every penny in every conceivable way.

We contacted Nora Sharif, Sultan's Irish wife, an outstanding person of numerous qualities, a devoted and dedicated lover of

Bangladesh and its people. After elaborate discussion from a public telephone booth with her at her home, it was worked out that I would take in my car all 5 members of the Jaigirdar family to Sultan Sharif's home at 25 Balvernie Grove, Balham; leaving behind Sultan with the luggage in the terminal building of Heathrow. About the same time when I was leaving for Balham, Nora would start the journey in the opposite direction in their car from Balham for Heathrow to pick up Sultan and the luggage of the Jaigirdars. Nora would of course leave behind the key to the house at a predetermined place near the door of the house so that I would find the key and enter the house. I remember Nora did not forget to leave behind some light refreshments on the kitchen table for the newly arrived guests.

The plan worked perfectly well. The guests were all comfortably accommodated for a number of days until alternative arrangements were made for them in a rented house. It may now, after 37 years, seem unbelievable, but this is how we had saved three pound sterling!

I sincerely thank her for permitting me also to reminisce about "London 71". I am a fond reader of her occasional columns sent from Canada in 'The Daily Star'. I earnestly hope she would continue to write on a regular basis.

Mohiuddin Ahmed
Acolumist
Former Principal
Foreign Service Academy and
Secretary to the Government of
Bangladesh
Uttara, Dhaka

Are you celebrating?

I am not here to spoil your party but I would like use this euphoric moment to ask some hard questions. Please, feel good for witnessing this historic moment where American voters have chosen a great man to their highest office. The other candidate is also an American hero but this was not his time. The Obama tsunami was just too much for McCain.

Let me start by disclosing that I am a lifelong Democrat and an avid supporter of Obama/ Edward Kennedy/ Robert C. Byrd. I am not a blind supporter of the party and not ashamed to admit that I have voted many times across party line for better candidates. One question that I have in my mind is why so much euphoria in other countries for a leader from a minority community winning the US presidential election whereas the same people might not like their countries run by a very similar capable minority candidate? Well, if you are thinking along that line and open to minority participation in all spheres of your country, I salute you and keep partying and I am with you. But, if for some reason you think the US needs this change and your country does not, your celebration is just a selfish one and you might as well stop it before they catch you for your hypocrisy.

It remains to be seen whether this victory would change the hearts and minds of many other countries and force them to look at their own backyard to check the reality whether they are ready for the quality leaders that might not come from the designated ethnicity, race and religion.

Shamol Saha
Boston University
USA

Accepting defeat

The Republican candidate McCain congratulated Barack Obama. After knowing the results within 20 minutes he telephoned Obama and addressed him "My President" and pledged to work together for the betterment of their country.

Actually, this is the essence of democracy. In a democracy there is no shame if one is defeated in an election. But what do we see in our country? In 1991 and 2001, the AL did not admit their defeat and the same was the case of the BNP in 1996. In 1991, an AL leader ventured to congratulate the BNP on the latter's victory but he was rebuked by his party chief and eventually he had to leave the party.

Can we expect to see any change in our upcoming election?
Harun-ur-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

US and the world

The aggressive and oppressive US foreign policy would get a respite the rest of this year, and in the beginning of the new year [2009], due to the unpredictable behaviour of the US dollar [Wall St, Sept. 2008]

Uncle Sam, now mind your own business for a while, and set your house in order; and give the rest of



MUNIR WASIF / DRINKNEWS

Bring back hartal!

I don't know about you people, but I am really bored. There is nothing exciting going on in Bangladesh these days. Our cricketers have been winning disappointments rather than trophies; our politicians have all been absent from the TV screen (due to no fault of their own, as we all know!); and all our extortionist brothers are playing hide-n-seek in Kolkata. (Why is it that as soon as our people become experts in a particular field, they move abroad? No wonder we have a huge brain-drain in our country.) Adding insult to injury, we have even turned our backs on our favourite pastime: hartal. Shock! Horror! What dark future are we leaving for our children? They are growing up without knowing anything about hartal. Remember the old proverb "vath, mas ar hartalay Bangali"?

So, on behalf of all our readers, I demand hartal to be reinstated immediately. We also want a national gallery, just for hartal (how about "The National Hartal

Gallery"?). All those glorious things we achieved by harnessing the magical powers of hartal will be displayed in that gallery. Anish Kapoor would be thrilled to create a huge, frozen explosion of a bomb (with the help of modern lighting technology and fibre optics) to capture the more exciting side of hartal, artistically speaking!

Both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina are back in business, the general election is coming, all the convicts are getting their nominations, cases against former MPs and ministers are being shelved all the ingredients for a true Bengali lifestyle are in place. The only thing that is missing is hartal. So, dear politicians, we know you are dying to reform your parties, to develop this poor country, to eradicate poverty, to exterminate corruption, etc. But please, please, before you do anything else, bring back our hartal! Yeah baby!!

Azad Miah
Oldham, UK

Bangladesh Bank's initiatives



The annual average rate of inflation is increasing. The government expects inflation rate to come down in this fiscal year. But the market is yet to see any downward inflationary trend. Money supply is continuing to

increase, causing an increase in price level. Bangladesh Bank (BB) has to manage money supply in such a way that it does not squeeze the availability of funds for business and industry. It should encourage investments in productive sectors. It should consider lowering of interest rate while governments across the world are reducing the interest rate to make funds available to people.

BB has taken some praiseworthy steps in the face of a financial meltdown. Bringing back the government investment from foreign banks has been a right decision.

S.M. Shamim-Ur-Rashid
Tushar
Department of Business
Administration
Shahjalal University, Sylhet

An inspiring leader

This is a unique moment. For the first time in the history of America an African American has become the president. We were supporting and hoping that a change would come and this man, who struggled so much in life coming from a broken home and living in extreme poverty, would win back the White House for the Democrats. He stood up against all odds and stiff opposition to win this historic election. He galvanized the whole nation and got the young and old, whites and blacks all engaged in this process to help him get elected so that he could bring about a change in America and get it out of its crisis. He inspired the people and even those beyond America's borders. He displayed a rare quality and that was perseverance. Even in the face of verbal attacks, diatribes and

racial slogans against him he did not retaliate and never slugged, all throughout the long campaign of almost two years. He really deserves accolade for that, especially when political campaigns are always very nasty. Obama has also proved that despite poverty and hardship a man can achieve what he wants to if he desires. All he needs is hard work and faith. He proved that education is the most powerful tool and he pursued it in the most difficult conditions and reached the top. I sincerely hope he will turn America around and bring about a change, which was his election campaign motto. It is a huge victory for him and a mandate for change.

The US presidential election has reaffirmed my faith in the American democratic process and system. It has sent a clarion message to the world that "Yes we can". It is time to heal

the wounds and win back trust.

Ali Hamid Khan
Uttara, Dhaka

My warmest felicitations to Barack Obama for his outstanding achievement. The people of the world were eagerly waiting to see the outcome of the US election and Obama has come out victorious.

It is a golden opportunity for Obama to bring peace back to the whole world.

AKM Anisul Haque
Department of English
Metropolitan University
Sylhet

The magnificent victory of Obama is a message for global change.
We believe that this win will change many things in the US.
M. Zakir Hossain Khan
Dhaka

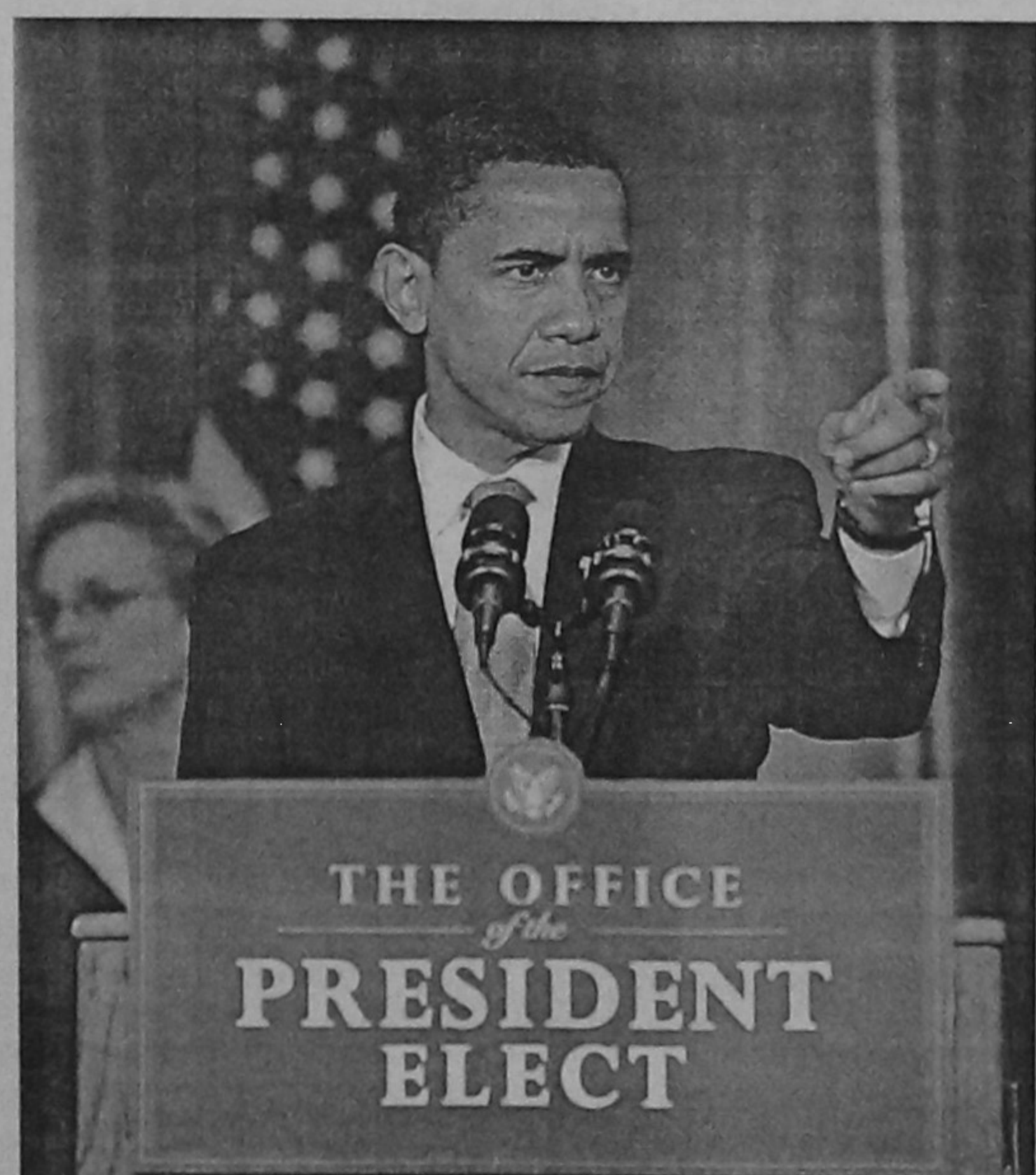


PHOTO AFP

Giving up smoking

Losing my closest acquaintances was the main reason why I gave up smoking. When I gave up smoking, it was an unendurable situation at first but soon, when the first feelings sunk in, I felt a lot better. Losing friends was more painful than losing money for nothing.

The initial reason d'être why I quit smoking was because I had to lose all my dear friends.

Day by day, I observed vulnerably that friends just left me one after another.

I didn't have pocket money for things like books, transportation etc. Most of the time, I had to wash those messy things up. These little everyday things got me perturbed with myself & my way of life.

Then one day, I determined that it was time for me to quit smoking like a self-imposed ban.

As a final point, I would say that what I have learnt is a lesson learnt in a most complicated situation. I hope that anyone can comprehend my external as well as internal sufferings and concurrently benefit from my experience.

Md. Rashidul Islam (Ratul)
Ex-employee of British Council
West Rajabazar
Panthapath
Dhaka

the world some breathing space to stand and stare -- we are paying a very high price for some of the small pleasures of life; most of which are free.

It is not the military power, but the stability of the single global currency in the world (USD). This is not the end of history, but the beginning of a New Age in human civilization; let us hope, Happy or grim Christmas? You asked for it! The New Year should leak out some new perspectives in this global village. The sine wave is shifting to the East, (Asia). Keep low the centre of gravity of the mass -- for humanized global understanding.

The media is speculating on a probable second 9/11 [new presidential election]. Who encouraged religious fanaticism, and why? Global politics failed. Change the tool, and its mode of application. Those who earn a dollar a day do not, and cannot, understand spending \$3,000 on a dinner.

When capitalistic and materialistic institutions collapse, it is time to take notice, and think about reforming the foundations of economic prosperity and balance. So far there is no reaction from the Middle East monarchs who are hoarding their wealth in the US. The shifting of deposits has already started, and confusing psychological factors might hurry indiscretions, making the situation worse. Confounded. The UMILS have a lesson to learn -- UNITE.

National Debate Festival

Though my exams were going in full swing, I went to Dhaka to be part of National Debate Festival '08. Indeed, it was a great occasion for me.

Moreover, this year NDF BD awarded "Life Time Achievement" to a person who played an active role in order to expand our debate. Indeed, this festival is a platform on which different types of debaters gather together.

Yes, debate is essential for our practical life. It is a sad truth that we have a lot of talented students who cannot express themselves properly. As a result, despite being good students they face a lot of difficulties in the international market and corporate business.

Finally, I would like to request all the debate related organisations, media (both print and electronic), sponsors as well as the ministry of cultural affairs to undertake such activities on a regular basis.

Aiman Bin Shaoifiqu Hamid
(Jasim)
Dept. of English
International Islamic University
Chittagong (IIUC)