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Congratulations, Obama

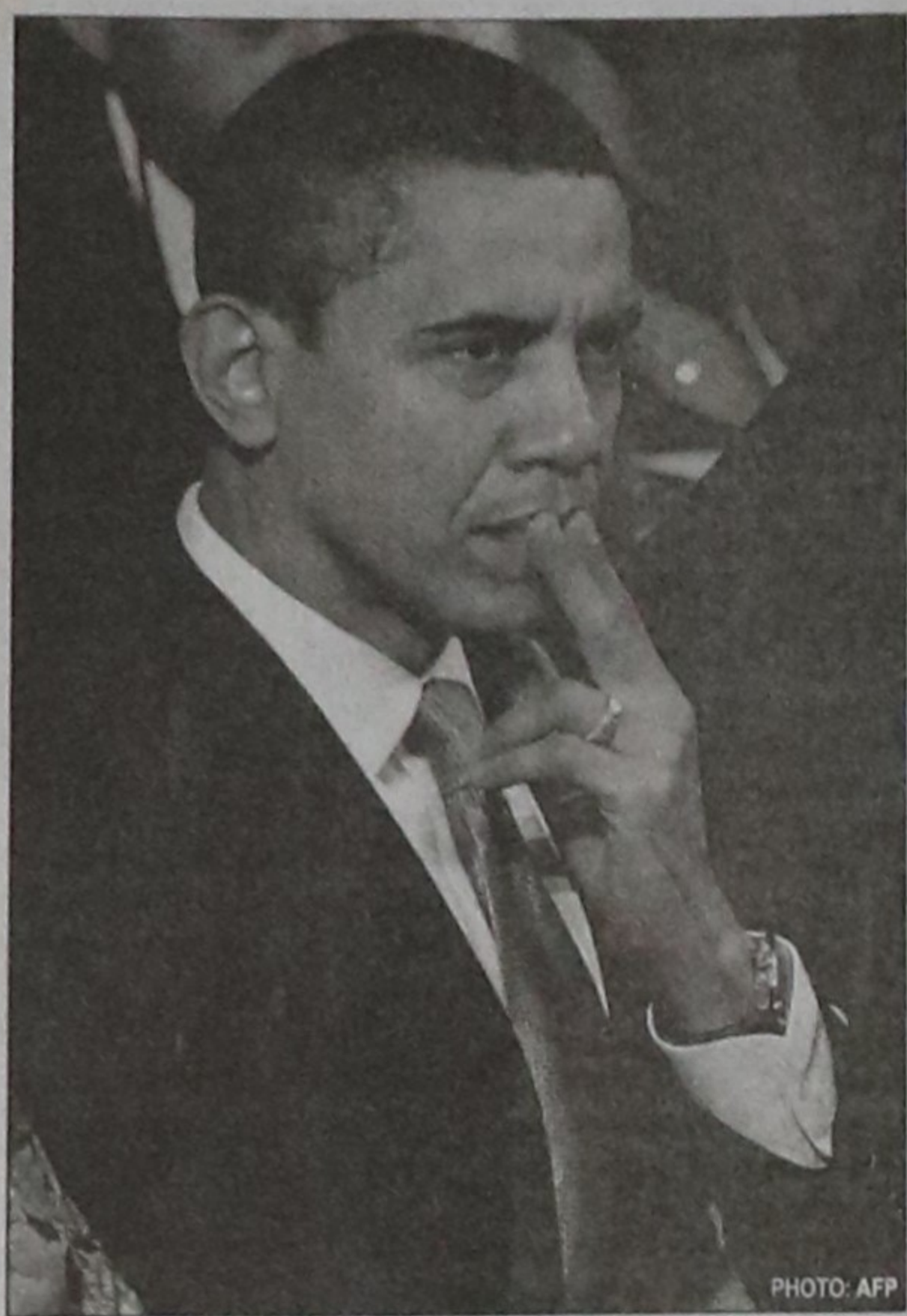


PHOTO: AFP

Barrack Hussein Obama took the reigns of power as the first black American President of the United States of America. Obama stepped into history on Tuesday by being sworn in, holding the bible used by Abraham Lincoln, as the 44th President of the USA. A few million people streamed into that nation's capital Tuesday, packing mass transit before dawn as out-of-towners and area residents alike headed for Pennsylvania Avenue and the National Mall for the

swearing in of the first black American president. Obama pronounced the 35-word oath of office, administered by Chief Justice John Roberts whose confirmation to the Supreme Court Obama voted against along with 22 other Democrat Senators back in 2005.

The son of a Kansas-born mother and Kenya-born father Obama's victory has possibly proved to the world that the USA is always the vanguard of changes.

We, the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish Justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America, can be a proud lot today.

We as the citizens of the world can look forward to a new order and hope that a change is coming which will be good for all of us.

It would be naïve to think he will be a miracle man and deliver wonders. After all he has to revolve around the system that guides and governs the administration. Therefore it may not be much in terms of policies. But what is hoped for is the change in attitude and outlook towards the rest of the world and appreciation of human rights.

Akku Chowdhury
One-mail

Obama is now in charge of presidency of the most powerful country in the world.

We do not want to see any more Iraq and Afghanistan and bloodshed should be stopped at any cost. We hope Obama will bring the real change in the world and try his level best to make it peaceful. Let's wait and see.

Nazir Sabri, Teacher
Touchstone school and college
Uttara, Dhaka

not been recognised by the country which he dearly loves and served selflessly; and where he wants to live and die and be buried! He is indeed a true Bangladeshi, in thought, word and deeds! How many such persons can we find today?

He is a shining light of dedication and selfless service for the needy, a rare quality! The present government may consider recognising and honouring such a selfless soul, who has dedicated his life for Bangladesh spanning over 55 years! I am tempted to paraphrase Sir Winston Churchill's famous quote in the House of Commons which I feel is an appropriate reflection of Father Marino's life.

"Never in the field of service to education has so much been owed by so many to the solitary few!"

May Allah bless this noble soul.
S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Banglapedia

"Banglapedia", a publication by Asiatic Society, is a wonderful and praiseworthy work in the print arena of Bangladesh. It is an encyclopaedia type of work on Bangladesh, its history, culture, geography, religion, archaeology and what not. It is a storehouse of knowledge on every sphere of our country.

I believe every family will take the initiative to procure a set of Banglapedia for the members.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka



MUNIRA MORSHED MUNNI / DRINKNEWS

Task ahead

The Awami League has won in a big way. Now they must use it wisely. With such a great victory come unreasonably great expectations. Many of their supporters will be let down because they are hoping for too much. We are aware of their limitations; everything now depends on how they govern.

The most difficult task is to control the price hike. It's my notion that both the Awami League & the BNP are lucky enough to escape the most turbulent times of worldwide food crisis. The rhetoric time is over now, we eagerly wait for the steps the next government

will take.

One of the major causes of the grand alliance's victory is the surge of the public opinion for the trial of war criminals. Now it's their duty to bring the war criminals to trial & ban the use of religion in politics.

And they mustn't forget why the BNP faced such a debacle. We want no nepotism, no corruption, no violence, only the welfare of the state.

Bangladesh has once again shown the unrivalled capacity to revive itself.
Solaiman Palash
East Jurain, Dhaka

Election 2008

The 9th parliamentary election has been held peacefully. National and international communities have described the election as free and fair. A survey conducted by International Republican Institute (IRI) has shown that 99 per cent of the voters believe that the 29th December election was free and fair.

The Election Commission has been praised by all the quarters for the job it had done successfully. The Commission as well as the commissioners were again busy with their new mission--the upazila election.

Arranging election is the constitutional duty of the Election Commission. However, its success always depends on how the people and parties concerned deal with the issue.

Md Abdur Rahman
South Bijoypur
Gournadi, Barisal

President Obama

History is made. We congratulate Americans for making it a reality. We pray for the success of Obama's presidency to march ahead taking the nation behind him and his administration. While watching the CNN coverage in the USA, I just switched over to a Bengali channel to listen to the news headline running concurrently with the live telecast of the CNN. On this solemn occasion, the tv channel could easily avoid showing Iraq.

A reader
One-mail

World today

The people of the world, irrespective of the religion they follow, are aware of the fact that the theory, "I am the State", died with the end of the French Revolution and that the modern world is moving away from "Master-Slave" pattern to "DEMOCRACY".

Will the world leaders take the responsibility to create a friendly world?

Badrul Islam
Free Lance writer
Gulshan, Dhaka

Halls and student politics

Most of the public universities are affected by student politics. Student politics is a cacophonous word. When a student enrolls into university and stays in hall, he/she is compelled to engage in politics and political activities. Most of the time of a student is spent in processions, meetings and other political activities. So he/she gets very little time to study.

The situation must change for the better.
Saifur Rahman
Department of Economics, DU

Rule of law and good judges

On 08 January I had the opportunity to listen to our newly appointed law minister Barrister Shafiq Ahmed twice on the TV screen, once in the morning while he was addressing the journalists, and then in the evening during a talk show. He is known to be one of the most learned and renowned lawyers in our country. On both the occasions, he expressed his firm conviction in the rule of law. No one can disagree with him. There cannot be good governance in the absence of rule of law. There cannot be any rule of law in the absence of learned, honest and efficient judges who can perform their duties independently and honestly.

Barrister Ahmed assured the people that he would certainly take necessary action as per if he received any complaint against any judge. An ordinary citizen has practically very little opportunity or scope to lodge a formal complaint against a judge.

May I also remind the honourable law minister that our present laws are not sufficient enough to deal with such cases. These laws were made long ago when the politicians or the appointing authorities were men of high integrity. People had full confidence in the persons who were appointed as judges. But, as we see, the situation is totally different now.

The last caretaker government of Dr. Fakhruddin identified the problem with our higher judiciary and thought of rectifying it, as they did with other organisations like ACC, PSC and UGC. They could not reform the higher judiciary, I believe, primarily for two reasons. One, to carry out such a huge reform that involves the constitution of the country a government needs very strong popular support. Obviously Dr. Fakhruddin's non-elected government did not enjoy that support. Two, such a major reform is usually followed by a backlash wherein quarters not interested in the desired reform try to create public disorder. Dr. Fakhruddin's government did not want to be distracted from their primary mission of holding the election by creating any public disorder.

The elected government of Sheikh Hasina with more than two thirds majority in parliament has the strongest political support of the people to do anything which is in the interest of the people. With such popular support at her back she need not bother about any backlash. In Bangladesh no government, however popular at the beginning it may be, can hold its popularity for

more than two or three years. Therefore, now is the time for Sheikh Hasina's new government to carry out the much awaited reform.

Syed Ashrafuzzaman
Mahakhali DOHS, Dhaka

Disturbing scene

Friday prayers in the Baitul Mukarram national mosque were disrupted due to a row over who would deliver the khutba or the sermon the government-appointed new khatib, (i.e. cleric delivering sermons) Mawlana Salahuddin or the Imam of the mosque and acting khatib Mawlana Nuruddin. Newspapers earlier reported that the government had appointed Mawlana Salahuddin as the khatib of the mosque. This had stirred up discomfort and anger among the activists of a political party who had long been using the mosque for their militant-type activities. In this context we can recall the mayhem that took place when they attacked their political opponents from inside the mosque just before the 2nd caretaker government took over on 1/11.

A television channel reported that Mawlana Salahuddin's followers had disrupted the Friday prayers. We ask: Why would they do

that? He has been newly appointed by the government. He has no cause for such irrational behaviour. We know him as a profoundly learned Islamic scholar who had served in the Dhaka Government Alia Madrasa as its principal. The caretaker government had rightly appointed him as the national mosque's khatib.

The present Awami League government is talking about trying the war criminals, but what do you do with the zealots who are disrupting peace and desecrating the sanctity of mazaars (shrines of Muslim saints) and mosques by bombing and vilifying those?

We watched with much awe the displaying of shoes inside the national mosque. These were disturbing scenes. It is incumbent upon the government to put an end to these disputes being fuelled by a political party.
Kazi Saifuddin Hossain
Dhaka

Father Marino

Star Insight's cover story on Father Marino Rigon, in its January 3rd issue by Rafi Hossain, is indeed a moving portrait of the life of a noble man who came to Bangladesh way back in 1953, to serve the people of a remote locality in Mongla. Unfortunately, he has

Stunning news

The nation is stunned by the news of alleged bribery and money laundering involving Khaleda Zia's two sons which shattered the country's image. Khaleda Zia as their mother and the then Prime Minister cannot avoid the responsibility in this regard and therefore owes an explanation to the nation.

The government should initiate an immediate enquiry into the allegations.

An aggrieved citizen
One-mail

Internet usage

Living in a third world country like Bangladesh, with half its population dragging their lives below poverty line, the ambition for competing with the hi-tech world is lofty, if not impossible. With a trifling number of people, one percent of the total population, using Internet, the status of the country regarding the usage of Internet is anybody's guess.

Elaborated as interconnected networks, Internet enables us to do online business, to communicate fast, to access and gather a sea of information and what not. In a nutshell, it is a virtual world with so many facilities embedded in it. It's getting popular-

ity not because of the fact that it does amazing things but because it reaches us to the superhighway of information technology, enabling the whole world to get connected.

However, the main objective of my writing this letter is not to illustrate the importance of Internet but to thank the government and the few NGOs for their commendable initiatives taken for the sake of reducing the cost of using Internet. Recently, Bangladesh Tele-

communications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has slashed the domestic bandwidth charge by 60 percent to reach the Internet facilities to the rural people who have been on the wrong side of the digital divide. The latest cut in charges has taken effect from December 1 with the intention of helping upgrade the living standards in the countryside by providing easy access to Internet. In line with the govt. efforts, some NGOs, e.g. BRAC, have taken long term plans to provide people living in different parts of the country with easy and affordable Internet connection.

The mobile operators, PSTN operators and ISP, have been instructed to reschedule their charges in line with the reduced charges. It is expected that the use of Internet and broadband will see a jump nationwide after all the moves get effect.
Sarwar Hussain
Dept. of Computer Science & Engineering
University of Chittagong

Great rescue operation!

I put my hats off to the crew of the US Airways Flight No. 1549. In aviation there are many safety equipments available both in aircraft as well as on ground. These equipments are kept serviceable all the time so that whenever any mishap takes place they can be used and loss of life minimized. This was a unique example of handling the emergency in an efficient manner. The crew here gets hundred percent marks.

We are amazed to see that all the life rafts and individual life vests worked well for which those are carried on board during every flight. I think it has never happened in aviation history that passengers are calmly waiting on the submerging aircraft wing to be rescued. Passengers were taken to safety by coast guards & other rescue agencies. We also appreciate the cabin crew who handled and guided the passengers in such a precarious situation. It had 155 persons on board out of which only two had minor injuries.

New York Times electronic version on 17th January 2009 reported that the aircraft A-320 was built by Airbus Industry in 1999 for US Airways. The US investigation

agency NTSB member Kathryn Higgins told that the aircraft was equipped with advanced data recorders which records power level in each engine, fuel flow, altitude, airspeed, angle, position of flight controls like Ailerons and rudder etc. The Flight Data Recorder and Cockpit voice recorder was recovered as well. The team has also lifted the airplane having 1 million pounds of weight for further investigation.

It was the right decision for the pilot in command to prepare for a ditch instead of trying to reach another aerodrome across the Hudson river, as the aeroplane was having no power and height left to reach the alternate aerodrome. The captain also used his glider pilot's experience to make this safe landing on a waterway instead of runway.

Now the world has to wait to see what actually comes out of investigation carried out by the veteran chief investigator Robert Benzon of NTSB who has extensive experience in handling such investigations as American Airlines A-300 crash after take-off from JFK in November 2001 killing 260 on board and 5 five on ground.
Jalal Uddin Ahmed
Director Engineering
Best Air

Israel deserves global condemnation

The wild and bloodthirsty Israeli soldiers were mercilessly killing innocent Palestinian children and civilians in Gaza. They do not care anyone, not even the UN resolution! Israeli atrocities crossed all limits. Israel deserves global condemnation.

The world conscience should raise voice against Israeli atrocities and take drastic action against this savage nation!
Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System, SAU, Dhaka

Freedom fighters

Since centuries freedom fighters have always fought the occupiers and invaders for their homeland. The occupiers have always termed the freedom fighters terrorists, that is what Israel is terming the freedom fighters of Palestine. Israel didn't exist before 1948, it was illegally settled on the Palestinian land with the help of western forces. If the Westerners were true friends of the Jews they would have provided or gifted a part of their own land to the Zionists. Grabbed or looted things cannot be a good gift!

We understand that the Jews love to stay in dusty deserts. Why don't the sympathizers and supporters (America) of Israel provide

some of the dusty deserts of their own country and get them settled there? This can be the right way of helping a friend. As of today, you see the support for Palestine across the world, donations for the re-settlement of Israel in the deserts of America will surpass the expectations.

The oil rich Arab states may pay anything to get rid of this disease (illegitimate Israel).
Mohammad Faruk
Nurjahan Road
Mohammadpur
Dhaka

Israel's brutal assault

As the assault of Israel on Gaza strip that started on the Christmas eve lingered on, the death toll continued to climb. It reached a staggering figure of 850 in 16 days. In other words, Gaza has become a valley of death. Civilians -- men, women and children -- were being killed by the brute force of the state of the art war machine of a menacing Israel. It is clear that the people of Palestine are helpless and at the mercy of the marauding force that has been unleashed on them.

One wonders how Israel can give a damn to the dictates of the UNO and violate the international laws at its will. It is common truth that Israel has enjoyed the blessings of the USA. It does not mean that it can do anything it wants. In the past, we saw many horrifying acts committed by Israeli forces that go against the norms of civilization.

Reports of worldwide protests against the recent assault of Israel has been circulated in the media. We also condemn this brutal show of power.

Zabed Wali
Pahartali
Chittagong

Economic order

In this twenty-first century the total population of the world has reached 6.3 billions. The 192 member-states of the United Nations (UN) are trying their best at all levels to cope with the challenges of the pattern and the modality of the transactions of goods & services and also the occupational trainings & skills when the barter trade is on the verge of complete extinction.

The governments, public bodies, sector corporations, companies, firms and individuals worldwide must comply with the ethics of the earliest & prompt settlements of the bills & charges, steady debt servicing, quicker documentation of the letter of credit, timely donations, and early loan repayments & payment of outstanding dues and the duties & taxes for a better economic order.

Gulam Ashraf
Gulshan
Dhaka

Conflict in Gaza



PHOTO: AFP

Palestinian militancy and Zionism, which mark the ideologies behind the conflict in the Middle East, are archaic and outdated. With the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, God is no longer tied to a specific geographical area. All the people of the earth are the People of God.

Violence is and always will be a show of inhuman ferocity that, precisely for this reason, will never be able to solve conflicts among human beings. Only reason and love are the valid means of surpassing and resolving disputes between people. No situation of injustice, no feeling of frustration, no philosophy can

justify such an aberration.

The recent cycle of blind violence we are witnessing in Gaza is the result of scandalous injustices and imbalances that create conditions favouring an uncontrollable explosion of the desire for revenge. When fundamental rights are violated, it is easy to fall prey to temptations of hatred and violence. Nonetheless, we must keep in check our base impulses and together work to build a global culture of solidarity that restores hope in the future to the young.

Paul Kokoski
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada