

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.



AFP

Bangladesh cricket

We congratulate the Bangladesh national cricket team on their victory over a stronger opponent, New Zealand. It has been a consistent display by the Tigers. Captain Shakib-Al-Hasan has shown how to lead from the front. The entire series has been a glaring example of good lead-

ership and team dedication.

This particular win has proved that 'success is all about consistency around fundamentals.' From the very beginning of the series the cricketers have tended to deliver their best. They were determined, hardworking and ingenious throughout the series.

Shakib and his team - keep growing and keep discovering your hidden capability; we look forward to seeing you perform even better in the upcoming Cricket World Cup.
Shohag Mostafij
MBA
University of Dhaka

Babri Masjid verdict

There is no denying the fact that the verdict on Babri Masjid has left a vast majority of Muslims feeling cheated by the judiciary. They had hoped for a judgement based on impartiality but it seems that the judges were influenced by the propaganda war unleashed by the anti-Muslim groups. Unfortunately, they are more vocal, more visible and able to influence many sane persons including Muslims. But they forget the safety and security enjoyed by the vast majority of non-Muslims in the Muslim areas/countries. In the recent past Muslims were brutally killed in Gujarat, Mumbai, Nellore, Bhagalpur and a number of other places. The denial of job opportunities and discrimination of Muslims in India is a well-documented fact.

The installation of idols and demolition of the Babri Masjid was a confirmed criminal act and the judgement tried to negate these fundamental facts by justifying that in the garb of faith.

Those who favour the judgement say that there was no violence after the judgement. Contrary to the perception, the fact is that Indian Muslims are peace loving, and even in the event of injustices done to them they abide by the rule of law. Had the judgement gone in favour of the Muslims, there would have been violence against them by their adversaries. However, the overall good about Indians is that a huge majority of Muslims and non-Muslims are peace loving and believe in the judgement, due to which we find that the main vocal critics of the judgement were Hindus.

An Indian
One-mail

Our defence expenditure

Once a mighty military power, Britain is now talking of major defence cuts to contain the budget deficit. The 5-month-old govt. under David Cameron made no bones about the unpleasant decision his govt. is about to take in view of the hard facts and ground realities.

The British PM is no novice and is very well briefed on the requirements under the changed geo-political scenario in the present conflict ridden world.

According to informed sources, the UK is spending a staggering US\$ 59 billion every year on its defence and plans some 25% cut, which may sound threatening to its men in uniform but a practical necessity under the changed conditions. Iraq and Afghan war has bled the US and UK economy badly. The good part is that the British PM has the guts to call a spade a spade. He had all the facts and figures at his disposal before he even ventured suggesting the cuts.

In Bangladesh, now that we have a democratic govt. in power committed to change the fate of the people and the country, we should give it time to deliver services. We should review the role of Bangladesh Armed Forces and its budget. Renewed friendship with India and Myanmar, and the changed ground realities call for a serious look into our defence expenditure including the size of the troops and armaments. Air force jet fighters, naval frigates, military tanks and artillery guns are all offensive weapons. With no enemy in sight the policymakers should revise our defence budget for the good of the country.

Habib-e-Rabbani
Shantinagar, Dhaka

Health tips

I would like to give the people of my beloved country some health tips. These are:

1. Potassium is a mineral. It helps to maintain correct blood pressure. It also keeps a person young. It doesn't mean that one has to take potassium without consulting a physician. Too much potassium, or too little of it, can be fatal for human body.

2. Coffee is full of antioxidants which are essential for our body. Coffee (with or without sugar) increases gluconeogenesis (increases the production and secretion of glucose into blood by the liver). That is why drinking coffee makes us feel better. Patients of hyperglycaemia (diabetes mellitus) must be very careful about taking coffee.

Dr. Ahsan Habib
Gulshan, Dhaka

Late SM Ali

Late SM Ali was an icon of journalism in Bangladesh. He set an example of objective journalism in the country for others to follow.

On our return to Bangladesh along with our parents- after the liberation of Bangladesh, and the passage of time thereafter, I felt my human system had started developing, in varying degrees and under a variety of circumstances, a philosophic mind for understanding, internalising and appreciating the role of journalism in a relatively new environment for us.

It will not be out of place to mention here: windfall from above and other developments have, I believe, enriched and fine-tuned inter alia my gene expressions associated with identifying and recognising leadership roles of late Ali, late Haq (Editor, The Bangladesh Observer) and others related

to journalism in the country.

Although I have lived longer outside Bangladesh than in, I have not failed, in one way or another, to keep in touch with developments in the field of journalism in the country. It is in that context I believe the nature and the scope of journalism in Bangladesh have achieved over the years new dimensions and additional critical mass under effective stewardships of journalists such as SM Ali, Obaidul Haq and their likes.

Dr. M.S. Haq
One-mail

Road conditions

I had the misfortune of travelling by road from Dhaka to Chittagong recently. It took us over ten hours. It was not because of heavy traffic but because of the slow pace and congestion resulting from the abysmal condition of the road. The stretch from Baroihat to Chittagong, perhaps some 70 kilometres, is in particularly bad shape. It is virtually without any surface and has innumerable potholes. It is difficult to imagine how the authorities could allow the condition of the most important highway of the country to deteriorate to this level when the concerned ministry is waxing eloquent about subways, magnetic trains, bridges and elevated expressways.

Our governments have been promoting "kleptocracy." One can, therefore, understand the motivation for mega projects. But when this is done to the exclusion of attention to routine functions, like keeping the national highways in good shape for example, the public suffer, and further damage is done to an already fragile economy.

May I suggest the Hon'ble Communications Minister

take some time off from his preoccupation with mega projects, and take a road trip from Feni to Chittagong, preferably without prior notice, so that the RHD does not have the opportunity to make cosmetic improvements. This may give him an opportunity to come face to face with reality.

Anonymous
One-mail

Halloween

As Halloween approaches I feel it important to remind parents and children that the feast of Halloween was once the vigil feast of All Saints' Day, which is celebrated on November 1. It was the beginning of a day in which we rejoice in the work of God seen in his saints.

Sadly, it has become heavily commercialised. Parents should be aware of this and try to direct the meaning of the feast towards wholesomeness and beauty rather than terror, fear and death. Wearing skeleton suits, dressing up as vampires, witches or goblins or slapping on fake blood is not far removed from communing with the Devil.

As we approach Halloween this year let us try to provide a wholesome, non-pagan alternative celebration, which thus rejects the pagan holiday.

Parents can, for example, dress up their children as popular saints instead of witches and devils. They can carve smiling faces, rather than menacing faces, into pumpkins. They can light a candle or display publicly another kind of light alongside, perhaps, an image of Christ. These things can be a powerful means of showing people that we have hope in someone other than ourselves.

Vic Veritas
One-mail

Khaleda Zia's cantonment house

The government should allow Khaleda Zia to remain in her cantonment house. People are passing their days in great misery. Power, water and gas shortage has become acute. In addition, prices of essential commodities have gone out of reach of common people and crimes of all sorts have increased manifold. Instead of tackling all these serious problems, it seems that the government is bent upon creating further distress for the people by asking Begum Khaleda Zia to vacate the cantonment house. It will definitely create an upheaval in the political field and the common people will suffer. We do not want fresh unrest; it is the government's duty to see that people live in peace, not to shatter it.

We have learned that the house was registered in the name of Begum Zia, after President Ziaur Rahman was assassinated. Is it necessary to evict her from that house where she has been living for so many years?

We do not understand why it has become so important to acquire that piece of land at the cost of unrest it will create. And people will look down on the Awami League government. We wonder whether the army really wants that land, to get which they will have to evict the widow of a former army chief.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

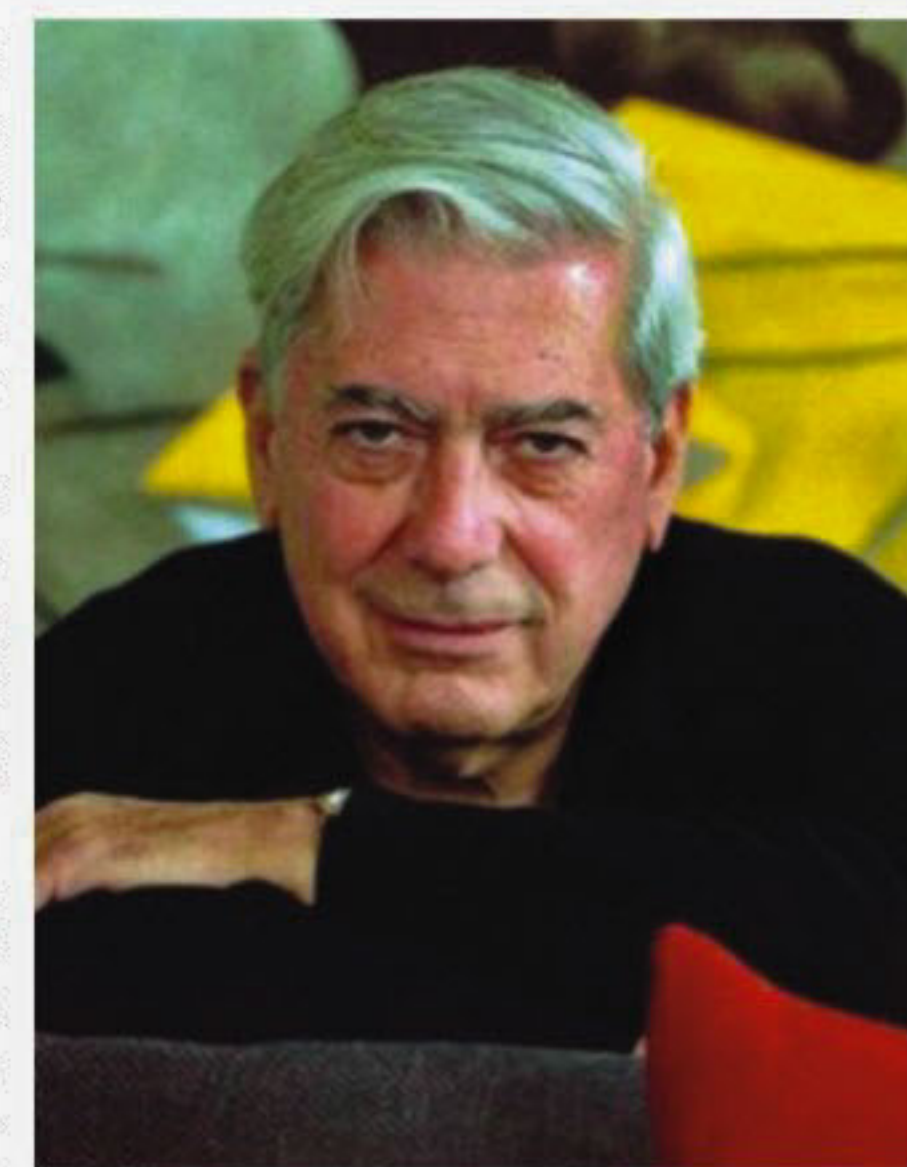
Mario Vargas Llosa

74-year old Vargas Llosa is the first Latin American to receive the Nobel Prize for literature since 1990, when it was bestowed on Octavio Paz of Mexico. The prize is given "for his cartography of structures of power and his trenchant images of the individual's resistance, revolt, and defeat."

King Philip of Spain considered it "fantastic news," while Colombian Nobel laureate (1982) Gabriel García Márquez commented on the Twitter "we are even." A long time ago good friends, García Márquez and Vargas Llosa now are poles apart on politics.

Vargas Llosa is a non-interventionist in the factual sense of the word, and is a firm believer of open market, freedom of speech and right to know. He has been advocating the decriminalisation of cocaine and marijuana, produced in Latin America for long time. He believes, "war on drugs" will never be winnable, and that the billions of dollars, spent on banning and arming often exploitative government security forces, should instead be used to educate people about the dangers of drug abuse and for treating addicts.

He has never been far away from politics like most Latin American writ-



ers. At 15, he was a night-owl crime reporter. Still in his teens, he joined a communist cell.

His prolific works include plays, essays, novels that range from historical to detective mysteries, comedy and political thrillers, and also newspaper columns and articles. Congratulations to Mario Vargas Llosa.

Mohammad Shahidul Islam
One-mail

US election and Bin Laden

When the midterm US election is just around the corner, all of a sudden Osama Bin Laden, who is believed to be dead, has appeared in the media from nowhere. The United States is capable of taking to task almost anybody as it did Saddam Hussein. Osama Bin Laden is no head of a state or government. He is a mastermind terrorist and is the brainchild of none other than the United States.

Whenever it is election time in the US, he surfaces from nowhere. It seems that there is a mysterious connection between Bin Laden and the US election. Thanks to the US media for giving metaphorical rebirth of Bin Laden ahead of US elections time and again. This is the way the Bin Laden myth will perpetuate.

Saleh Ayub
One-mail

Oil/gas exploration

I am very glad to have read the news item in the 6th October 2010 issue of The Daily Star that our govt. has approved exploration of oil/gas at Salda along Bangladesh border with eastern India. The nation's first oil/gas exploration was successful at Haripur long ago, few miles east of Sylhet town, and expectation is high that more success would come up at Salda, and may be in other parts of Sylhet.

Drilling for exploration of oil and gas at the east of the village Karaballah, close to the Indian border and west of Atgram Bazaar, was abandoned years back on the ground of "inadequate" availability. Within a very short time thereafter, India discovered gas and oil in their territory which was close to our abandoned site.

I think that more explorations around the area on the north bank as well as south-west bank of Surma along Sylhet-Charkhai-Atgram Kaliganj Zakiganj areas would be worth the effort.

Altah Ahmed Choudhury
Zakiganj, Sylhet

Peace talks

With settlement activities back in full swing and Israel showing no interest at all in a peaceful and just solution to the Middle East conflict, one can say that Palestine, as we know it, is lost.

The two hundred UN resolutions that Israel has violated, and continues to violate without accountability, is a wake-up call for all those who have faith in the UN. It is an institution that is used to maintain a certain world order and NOT to enforce international law and bring justice to the weak, the oppressed and occupied.

The US State Department's Philip J. Crowley has expressed "disappointment" to Israel for resuming illegal settlement building in East Jerusalem. Disappointment has given way to disbelief, fury and a sense of betrayal for the rest of the world that is aching for a just solution to the conflict. After decades of occupation and negotiations, with successive US presidents playing partial and biased negotiators, Palestinians have got nothing.



The Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has inexplicably chosen to indulge the current US president and endorse a continuation of the comatose peace process.

The PLO leadership has relinquished its ancestral lands to the Israelis without much resistance, choosing monetary gains over principle.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has played the game of lies and deceit, so typical of the Israeli leadership, and come up trumps, for now it seems the peace process is dead. Those hanging on to it are in denial. Who will help Palestine and bring justice to the Holy Land?

Muhammed Jamil Ather
Karachi, Pakistan

Joining parliament



If I remember rightly, BNP is not joining the parliament because it wants more seats in the front bench and more time to talk in the house. I feel that the best way to sort it out is to go by it mathematically, based on the number of seats won (not nominated women's seat). The calculation could be as follows, based on a hypothetical election result.

Suppose in the 300-seat house, AL wins 210 seats, BNP wins 65, Workers' Party 10 and Jamaat 5, and the balance by independents. Also suppose that there are 20 front row seats to be distributed. Then the allocation of the seats could be as below:

AL: 210/300X20 i.e. 14 seats.
BNP: 65/300X20 i.e. 4.33 or 4 seats (.33 being ignored and .5 and above rounded to 1)

Workers Party could get 1 (10/300X20 i.e. .66=1)

Similarly the time for speaking can be allotted in the same way for each session. Should a party not want to speak, it can offer the time to a member of another party, at its choice. This will be calculated from the day's available time. Should a party exceed the time limit, it will be deducted from the next day or the next session.

With this rule being applied, there should be no 'Natok' for not going to the Sangsad. Further, if any MP misses more than 30 percent of the sittings for no reason other than being on state duty, or medically sick or genuine reasons accepted by the Sangsad Administration Committee, he or she will lose the seat, which will go to the next person who got the next higher vote, in the last election.
A voter, Dhaka

Disparity in education

We have seen two reports in the national dailies that there are no primary schools in 131 villages of Kurigram district and 67 villages of Tangail district.

The thirty government schools of Rajshahi division have no regular headmasters. On the other hand, a few primary schools are getting laptops, and in near future all of these schools will get computers as part of the digitalisation process.

Why this disparity?
Tuli
Engineerpara
Rangpur

Save our village

Charkumaria is an old village of greater Daudkandi in Comilla district which is about 400 years old. During the British period it was a centre of attraction for travellers. But this beautiful village, habited by around 5000 people, is being ruined by river erosion. During 1964-1971 Kathalia river was about 1 km away from the village. But now our village is standing on the bank of the river.

The BWDB authorities can easily protect Charkumaria by constructing an embankment at the cost of Tk. 10-20 lakh only. We urge them to do the needful in this regard urgently.
Md. Ilias Meah and others
Charkumaria
Comilla