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Importance of tolerance and unity in democracy



PHOTO: AFP

It was a devastating night for Mitt Romney and the Republican Party, yet Romney was gracious in defeat. The stinging disappointment was etched clearly on the faces of Romney's sons and daughters-in-law, who joined him on stage after a five-minute speech.

"I so wish that I had been able to fulfil your hopes to lead the country in a different direction," Romney told a few hundred supporters and staffers in a stunned convention centre ballroom. "But the nation chose another leader, and so Ann and I join you to earnestly pray for him and for this great nation."

Romney spoke a few minutes after 1 a.m., following a few hours of deliberations among his top campaign advisers over whether to concede or to wait for all the results. Eventually, the 65-year-old former private equity CEO and Massachusetts governor emerged to concede.

"I ran for office because I'm concerned about America. This election is over but our principles endure," Romney said. "I believe that the principles upon which this nation was founded are the only sure guide to a resurgent economy, and renewed greatness."

Obama in his thanks-giving speech said that he will work with the opposition party to re-build his country.

So much positive things we can learn from the leaders of these countries. When the election was happening in the USA, a model election occurred in the Westin Hotel of Dhaka.

When the US Ambassador in his speech was mentioning the importance of tolerance, unity and patience of all the political parties. Two political leaders of our two main political parties have been saying unwanted things in front of everyone. Will tolerance and unity be ever found in our country?

Nazrul Islam Rizvi
 Scholastica School
 Dhaka

Improvement in hunger status

We have learnt from this daily that this year's annual report of State of Food Insecurity (SOFI) released jointly with three UN bodies says that the percentage of hungry people in the total population of Bangladesh has reduced from 34.6 in 1990 to 16.8 this year. That means the number of people living in hunger has reduced from 37 million in 1990 to 25 million in 2012 in our country. Moreover, Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute has also reported that Bangladesh goes two steps up in the global hunger index (GHI) this year to 68th position from 70th last year. Even, rate of improvement of hunger status of Bangladesh is better if compared in the global and regional perspective.

On average, a person needs about 1,800 kilo calories per day as a minimum energy intake. However, poor people can not ensure this minimum level of daily energy requirement. Unfortunately, the existing poverty rate is still 31 percent in our country despite the incumbent government's electoral pledge to bring poverty rate down to 25 percent by 2013.

Nevertheless, improvement in hunger status is very encouraging. Now the government and the NGOs concerned should take the challenge for providing poor people with protein-rich food like milk, egg, meat, etc., to enhance the national nutritional level.

Mobarak Ali
 RK Mission Road
 Gopibagh

Under-aged drivers...

Every day I have to travel by Tempo -- from Chittagong New Market to the Karnaphuli bridge-- on my way to workplace. I have noticed one thing: most of the Tempo drivers are under-aged.

Judging by their appearance, some of them have barely passed their teens. They drive recklessly through the alleys of Pathorghata and Syed Ashraf Ali Road. Sometimes one Tempo tries to overtake another thereby jeopardizing the safety of the passengers. One wonders if these drivers have valid license. The assistants of these Tempos are mostly kids who should be at school.

We hope that the authorities concerned will look into the matter.

ZabedWali
 On e-mail



PHOTO: STAR

World looking up to Obama

People all over the world are feeling relieved and very happy by the news of President Barack Obama being re-elected and thanking the people of America for taking the right decision. We see in Barack Obama a positive attitude -- he is not indifferent to other people's sufferings. He seems to possess sound judgement, great wisdom, humility and kindness. We were touched when we saw him breaking down in tears as he was speaking to his campaign team in Iowa for the last time.

Former President Bill Clinton described Barack Obama as a person "who is cool outside, but burns inside."

We expect that in his second term he will be able to take concrete steps to bring peace between Palestine and Israel. The Palestinians have been suffering for so long; they are deprived of their land and are living in an inhuman condition.

We hope he will maintain a peaceful relationship with other countries including Iran. Global warming has become a curse. It is wreaking havoc on all over the world. President Barack Obama should take the matter seriously and do something to combat it.

The world has so many expectations from him; we hope and trust that by the help of the Almighty, he will be able to fulfil it.

Nur Jahan, Chittagong

USAID's agri-R&D education programme

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in association with Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) in Mexico is going to launch Borlaug Higher Education Agricultural Research and Development (BHEARD) programme with an aim to increase the number of agricultural scientists and strengthen scientific institutions in developing countries. Honouring the legacy of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Norman Borlaug, the programme has been named as "Borlaug Higher Education Agricultural Research and Development (BHEARD) Program". The Michigan State University (MSU) has been selected to implement the USAID's 'Feed the Future' BHEARD Programme. The BHEARD Programme will focus on training a cadre of BHEARD Fellows at the MS and PhD levels which is indispensable for creating scientific capacity.

Meanwhile, as part of the training need assessment plus identification of core development areas, the BHEARD management team under the leadership of Eric Crawford, Professor of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics and Co-director of MSU's Food Security Group, has recently visited Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University (SAU).

In a very cordial atmosphere the SAU representatives discussed various aspects of the programme implementation strategies with the BHEARD management team members. The SAU side was led by Prof. Dr. Md. Shahidur Rashid Bhuiyan, Pro-Vice Chancellor of SAU. We hope the BHEARD programme will greatly help develop scientific manpower in SAU and other universities of Bangladesh.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
 Dean, Faculty of Agriculture
 Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University

Sufferings of Hajjis

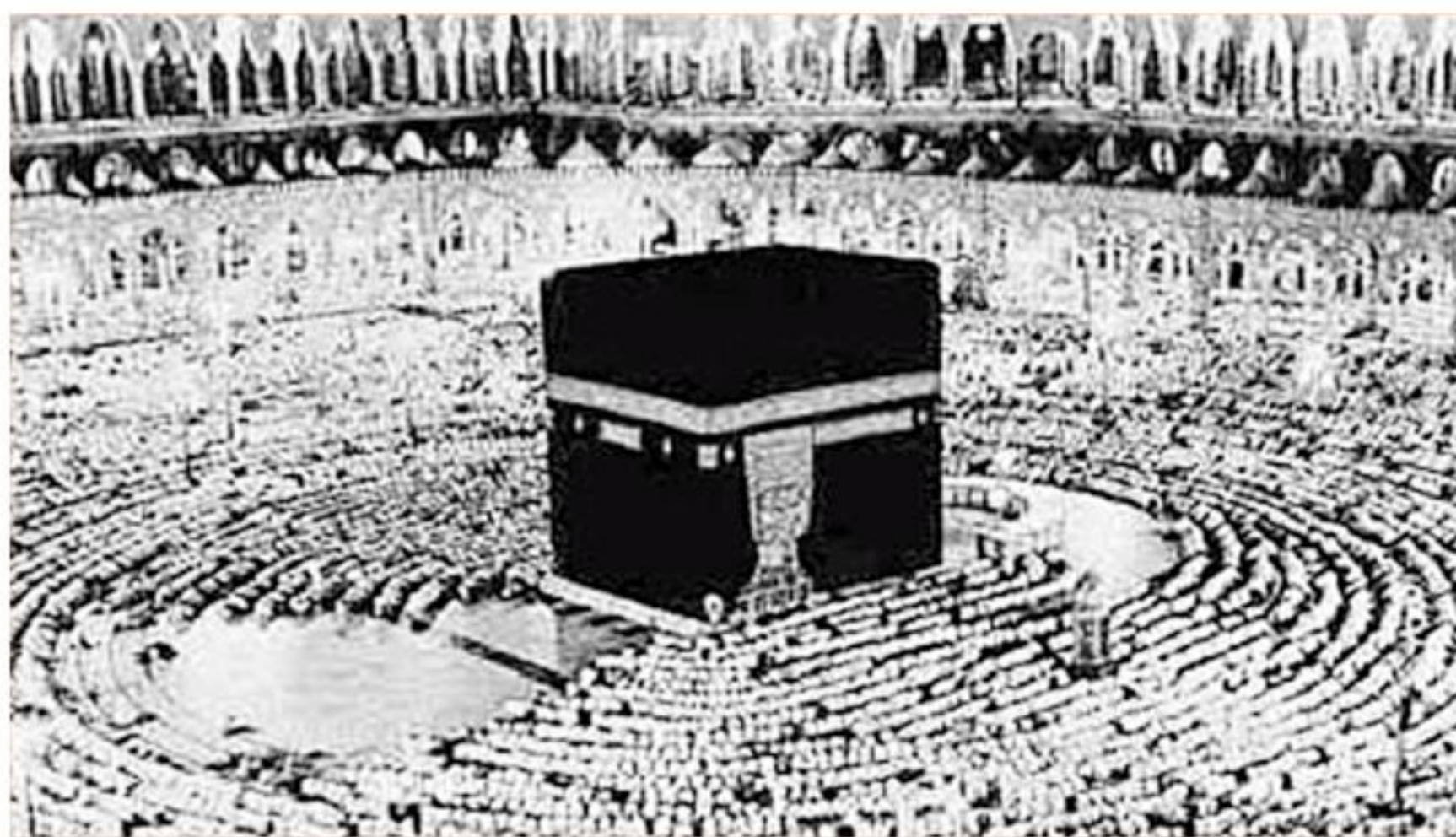


PHOTO: INTERNET

3,657,000 Muslims across 189 countries performed their Hajj this year and out of that number 1,752,000 were foreigners. Among the Hajj pilgrims, 500,000 were not registered. This resulted in great difficulties as facilities were not planned adequately as they were not accounted for. However, Prince Khaled, Governor of Makkah called it a great success as casualties were fewer casualties. To stop the irregular pilgrimage, there are suggestions to build a wall around sacred areas which many compare to the wall around Jerusalem. But this may ultimately stop Muslims entering the place as conspiracy theory suggests.

I have seen the suffering of our Hajjis with my own eyes and would like to bring some important points to your notice. Private Hajj agents are involved in malpractices and often their charges are enormously high compared to market rates and services available. Suffering of Hajjis who go through government programmes is not also less since where they stay is far from the sacred places and transports are not provided either. These Hajjis are left on their own as far as their food and transport are concerned. Many suspect that this was done deliberately to make the Hajjis go for private packages which are often impractically expensive. Proper evaluation on the age needs to be strictly followed as I observed some of our elderly Hajjis were simply not capable physically and in some cases mentally. Lack of education is also a major factor and no guides are provided as it is always mentioned within the arrangements.

Sheikh Monirul Islam, Opee
 Madina, KSA

Local donations for Padma bridge

The World Bank (WB) has given tacit approval to resume its 1.2 billion dollar loan to the government for constructing the Padma bridge which was previously postponed because of the alleged corruption in the project. After the postponement, the government sought donation from public. In response, donation was made to more than one designated bank accounts. Since the WB has revived the funding, what will happen to the raised fund? This fund should be handled transparently and the general mass should be informed of the transactions.

Tashrif Billah
 Dhaka

A disappointing train journey

I had never travelled by train in my life except in India. Once, our family went on a vacation to India where we had travelled from Kolkata to Delhi via Rajdhani Express - a well-known train. The

journey was extra-ordinary. We enjoyed each and every moment in the train as it was not arduous at all.

On last Eid vacation, we went to Chittagong by train. It was my maiden ride by train in Bangladesh. I was overjoyed and dreamed that the trip would be splendid like the one I experienced in India. But, I was down in the dumps the whole journey because the service was depressing. The train was delayed for about two hours. The canteen, which I imagined to be superb like India's, was the most repulsive. If I would have the food, I would have instant diarrhoea. The toilet was nauseating.

Though we hear that the railway is not a profitable sector, the train was overcrowded. This is a telltale sign of corruption. As there was seat shortage we had to pay Tk. 4,000 for ticket, which should not have been over Tk. 2500. If the government improves the train service, it will earn a lot from this sector. Train would be a preferable transport and our 'Bangladesh Express' would be known worldwide.

Sakib Ahmed
 Anandaniketan School

READERS respond

Here are some comments that came in response to Sunday's *The Daily Star* news report headlined "It's my remark, not Amartya's"

Mufassil Islam

We must not be surprised at all as most of our politicians deny the truth.

Roni Rahman

Is the present government now targeting all the Nobel prize winners?

Niloufar Sarker

Whom should we believe now, with an incriminating audio? What a shame!

Ahmed Kamal

We need to read the full statement of Prof. Amartya Sen and the recorded statement of our respected FM. It says that a full discussion was held on the achievements of Bangladesh in various socio-economic fields to which both agreed, and why Bangladesh was getting inadequate international attention was also discussed.

Miller

It is a shame. From the time of removal of Prof. Yunus, our finance minister has been speaking against Prof. Yunus and also went on to say that he was the founder of Grameen Bank, not Prof. Yunus. But now he says Prof. Yunus is the founder of Grameen Bank.

Shah

By ignoring the worldwide popularity and acceptance of Dr. Yunus, Muhith and his party people are just wasting time and demeaning themselves.

Hemayet

Dr Yunus may not be involved but the fact remains that investments in Bangladesh have been affected due to negative reactions from his powerful international friends.

MR

Making irresponsible comments is probably one of the noted characteristics of the Bangladeshes.

Dr. Mahfuzul H Chowdhury

What a disgrace! It looks like people who are running the country have gone crazy. This is very unfortunate for the whole nation, not only for the Awami League government.

Shabbir A Bashar

I have heard the voice recording. It is not obvious that Muhith was quoting Mr Sen. I put it down to journalism eager to make a big issue out of nothing by trying to entangle a foreigner into what is clearly a domestic affair. Muhith's dislike for Yunus is well known. So what? People have the right to like or dislike whoever they want; Muhith must now provide evidence that Yunus is the major cause behind lack of FDI. Frankly, I think neither Yunus nor Muhith are so powerful that they can sway foreign investment so much.

Tirtho Mahmud

It is a sign that Bangladesh needs a new trend in politics and quite a new generation