



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.



## Who is responsible?

I have read the letter of Ajjtkumer published under the heading "Who is responsible?" Unfortunately Mr. Ajjtkumer has missed the atrocities carried out by the BNP cadres concerning the joining of some BNP leaders to a new political party formed by Col. Oli Ahmed. BNP cadres set their homes on fire, tortured their family members and destroyed their businesses. They had done it before when Mr. Badruddoza Chowdhury, the ex-president formed the

Bikolpo Dhara Bangladesh. Khaleda Zia, the former prime minister, miserably failed to protect human lives and properties. Being an elected prime minister of a country she was constitutionally obligated to do so.

I condemn any political violence and loss of innocent lives. But what BNP and Jamaat have done over the last five years is very rare in a democratic society. I firmly believe that one day they will be tried for gross violation of

human rights. If we, as a nation, fail to bring them to justice then the international community will form tribunal to try them for crimes against humanity. During their five-year rule they killed thousands of innocent people without trial, tortured minorities, compelled people to leave the country and looted properties.

Please Mr Ajjtkumer, apply your conscience before making any judgment.

**Afsana Islam**  
On e-mail

### Khaleda's pilgrimage

I live in the US. I learned from one of the Bangladeshi TV channels that Begum Khaleda Zia was on her way to Saudi Arabia for a 7-day trip to perform umra. The news item also stated that her entourage would include her two sons and their wives, three grand children and two of her brothers and their families.

It is my understanding that Khaleda Zia had performed hajj and umra before. I have also been told that she had performed umra more than once, probably numerous times. Performance of hajj is obligatory upon all Muslims, provided they fulfill several stringent religious requirements, one of which is that his/her relatives and/or neighbours should be poverty free. By just this single requirement, my question is, does Khaleda Zia, the prime minister of one of the poor countries in the world, qualify to perform hajj or umra? The same applies to Hasina Wajed, who too has performed this religious act.

My next question is who was bearing the costs of this entourage of Khaleda Zia, numbering probably 30 to 35 people? If the government bears the costs of this trip then I strongly oppose it.

**Zulfiquar Ali**  
New York

### BNP rule

The last five years of BNP rule was the worst period in the 'life' of Bangladesh. The country has been divided into two parts (read pro-liberation and anti-liberation, or rightist and left of centre). 'Districtism', nepotism, autocracy etc. have added new dimensions.

They have formed a syndicate to rule, dominate and plunder the country. This practice of naked, unethical and ill-motivated patronization has to be stopped for free development of the country.

Many efficient officers were neglected because they do not belong to the 'proper' district.

We would like to draw the attention of the caretaker chief to this unethical phenomenon.

**SNM, Dhaka**

### Caretaker government

The caretaker government full team is now in place. The outgoing ruling alliance has welcomed all actions of the president so far. On the other hand, the opposition parties are maintaining their scepticism regarding the neutrality of the caretaker government and have expressed their desire to watch the developments.

One would expect that the caretaker government will act rising above any political choice or loyalty and thus prove its neutrality—a difficult but attainable task if no interference comes its way. I would urge the caretaker government team to kindly keep the people in confidence and maintain full transparency in their acts and deeds.

We hope that the adviser in charge of the ministry of information will ensure freedom of information and respect the people's right to

## Politics and the Nobel laureate



I firmly believe that the time for a change has come. It is significant that at this critical moment when we need a true leader we have Dr. Muhammad Yunus among us. We have to believe that Dr. Yunus can deliver better results than the two major political parties have.

I know there are opinions that he should remain aloof from dirty politics. Unless we want to clean up the mess that these two political parties have made, we will continue to live in dirty politics. I believe he has all the ingredients to make the change and make Bangladesh a better place to live in.

**Hassan Nawaz, On e-mail**

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Pride of the nation Nobel laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus has urged both the ruling and opposition parties to settle their disputes immediately and participate in the upcoming election. Celebrating his winning the Nobel Peace Prize, he said, while addressing a gathering, that the nation is united. He also observed everywhere an unprecedented example of unity of the nation to congratulate and accord reception to him on this great occasion.

There is no doubt about the unity of the nation on any national issue, but it is a matter of great regret that the politicians keep the nation divided to achieve their vicious goals. They always try to keep us in the dark about their real motive; what they use to tell us are their own problems. If they are patriots they should have sacrificed some of their own interests for the cause of the greater national interest. Now the nation cannot get out of the vicious net they have created over it. They convince people of doing politics for betterment of the nation but what they produce for the nation in fact are suffering and frustration.

Professor Yunus may come up to shoulder the huge responsibility of salvaging the nation. In that case he has to start the groundwork now with tolerance and respect to others.

**Mahbul Hoque, On e-mail**

## Poverty reduction: A challenge

know and thus uphold the constitutional rights of the people.

**A reader, On e-mail**

### Opinion poll on leaders

The entire population, young and old, feels the frustration with the political leadership in Bangladesh. We all want a change in leadership and direction, and it is time to let AL and BNP know how we feel.

I propose that we hold an sms poll on dynastic politics: YES sms to 666, NO sms to 786. I think the predictable results of this poll will send a clear message to AL and BNP that the people want a change in the leadership of both the parties. Both the parties will have to consider institutionalising democracy within their respective parties to select the party leaders, instead of leadership being inherited and passed on to the offspring. The new leaders can put aside their personal and party interests and we can all work together in the national interest.

**Omar Chowdhury**  
Uttara, Dhaka

### National Anthem

I was watching a programme called "Let's Move" in Channel-i at 7.30pm on 31 October. In the show one girl sang our National Anthem. Neither she nor the host and others who were surrounding her did feel the urge to stand up.

What does that really mean?

**Shiblee Mirza**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Though the government is claiming their success in the reduction of poverty, yet it is a fact that 24% of the total population is living in abject poverty. In the last decade there were some positive changes in our country but unfortunately the lots of these poor people have not changed much. They have remained poor for a long, long time. Poverty as an agenda occupies the national discourse during the time of election or in the budget making session. Though poverty alleviation takes some place in the manifesto of political parties but it only gets lip service excluding a definite roadmap to alleviate it. Thus, the policy makers and politicians always ignore the poor.

It has been revealed from a study that about 24 percent of the total population currently live in extreme poverty with 19 percent of the rural households going without three meals a day and 10 percent subsisting on two meals. Nowadays we do not hear about famine but the fact that a significant portion of our population is passing their days with hunger is really a matter of great regret. Moreover, the income gap between the poor and rich is very wide and it is extending day by day. Due to the inequality in the distribution of wealth, the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. Though our GDP growth has increased but its outcome is yet to reach to the poor. Therefore, if we want to gauge the poverty situation in Bangladesh through the index of economy the proper picture may not be revealed. In this situation, our policy makers

should pay heed to changing the lot of these poor people. A programme like VGF is not enough. The public and private organisations should work hand in hand to increase job opportunities in the rural areas.

In this regard, I must mention the work of Grameen Bank and the contribution of Dr. Yunus to alleviation of poverty, which has received a worldwide acceptance. We must not only praise Dr. Yunus for winning the Noble Prize but should also be inspired to think up something creative and dynamic like him to uproot this problem tree. There is a proverb: "Don't give a man a fish but teach him how to catch fish". That's exactly what Dr Yunus did. Only

giving some money to the poor cannot solve their problems. We must manage permanent sources of income for them through which they can earn their livelihood.

Dependence on different organisation like IMF, World Bank or UN is the main reason for our failure in alleviation of poverty. We always expect someone coming like the prince of a fairy tale to solve our problems. But it is quite absurd. We are the ones who can shape our future and the best way to shape it is to work hard.

**Naomi & Chobida**  
Dept of Law, DU

