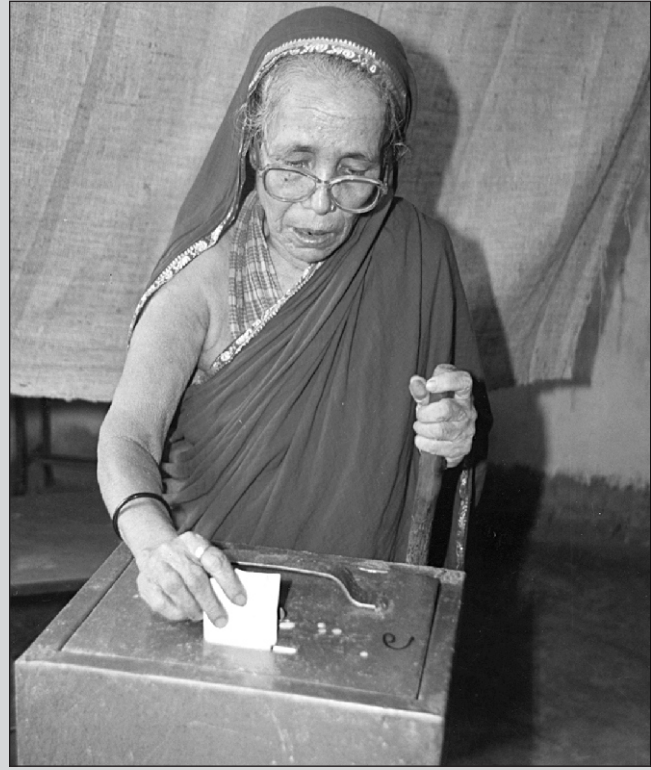


# Assessing the alliance



## March ahead!



Verdict in vain?

While watching the news at ten, a special bulletin with the caption 'March Ahead' drew my attention. Snapshots of banning polythene bags, opening of water reservoir in Sayedabad and last but not the least our PM attending international conferences and entertaining foreign guests were shown, to make it look like we are marching toward development. Alas, the producers of the film forgot to insert some more pictures that are as real as the PM attending the UN conference.

Criminals swearing in as ward commissioners in parole, political murders, abduction of children, rape and murder of women of all ages, etc fill in the columns of every daily. These occur like day to day incidents now. Moreover, there are the price hikes in different sectors and the most secular budget that leaves my father poorer this year.

Unfortunately, the list of the failure of this government in different sectors is greater than its achievement in banning polythene, introducing CNG driven taxis etc. With 60 ministers in the cabinet, should we not expect it to function more efficiently than others? Or is it 'too many cooks spoiling the broth'?

Arani Siddiqi, IBA, DU

FM, Chittagong

## The most successful one year for the criminals

BNP-Jamaat coalition government has given a wonderful one-year for the people of Bangladesh, thanks to its jumbo cabinet and its in-house criminals. The country never experienced a government of misrule like this one. Crimes such as torture on the minorities, rape, murders, kidnapping, corruption, tender and land grabbing are few among all. Universities were closed down frequently. Murder of a BUET student by an alleged BNP man was pathetic. Arresting Shariar Kabir with no good reason and involvement of a minister, govt. officials and MPs in the wheat scam was certainly a shocking news for us. The Shipping Minister was also alleged corrupt by a Danish official. Knowing everything what the PM had done? She kept quiet all the way and did not take actions against the culprits of her own party. The government also has failed to control dengue fever totally.

Mr. Saifur Rahman achieved an increase in foreign reserves. Foreign reserve would certainly increase if money is not spent on development works. He also adapted a bad tax policy on the middle-class people. NGOs are having difficult time. I am only thankful to the Environment Minister and the Communication Minister for withdrawal of polythene bags and 2-stroke baby-taxis.

My question is: What will happen in the next few years?  
Fuad Hussain  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Things fall apart

People of the country rejected the Awami misrule and voted BNP and its allies to power with the expectation that the change would give them peace, if not prosperity. The well-drafted and articulated televised speeches by Khaleda Zia before and after the October general election kindled their imagination. But, alas, the illusion soon was followed by disillusion! The first shock came as we watched the swearing-in of the jumbo size cabinet on the TV screen. BNP so far has not been able to show any sign of efficiency or mastery in matter of governance.

The way the BNP is running the show reminds me of W.B. Yeats' poem "The Second Coming" in which the poet depicts a time when "the centre cannot hold" and "the falcon cannot hear the falconer". The ruling party does not seem to have any control over its rank and file. The BNP leaders sound complacent as they claim that like Awami League their party does not patronise "god-fathers". But aren't they aware how many Frankenstein-like demi-god fathers are looming large in different corners of the country?

The Prime Minister's preference for written speech and apparent reluctance to address impromptu signify more than one thing. That she is taciturn as opposed to her garrulous predecessor. This is well respected, but her reluctance to extemporise or improvise bears the mark of her characteristic indecision. In fact, the BNP government seems to epitomise the idea of indecision: even after one year they have not been able to downsize the jumbo cabinet which was so widely speculated and expected. That things are falling apart and centre cannot hold has been manifested in the alleged tug-of-war between the secretariat and the so-called young Turks dominated Hawa Bhaban.

As a supporter of BNP I sincerely want it to succeed. If the situation does not improve significantly very soon, I feel terrified as I visualise the disaster the party would end up in.

Rafid Ahmed  
Halishahar, Chittagong

## Hard talk

As a first time franchiser, my expectations were high. I am disillusioned now. The situation is hopeless.

1. The government has been swallowing and agreeing to all that has been said about the large ministerial entourage. I expected them to cover more areas in proportion to their size at least. Seems they work on day to day basis. None have any vision.

2. Their decision on AJM is appreciable. Expected the same attitude in solving polythene and engine emission cases.

3. The post of the President is an institution. The way President Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury had to resign will be in record for many years to come. Some day it will surface.

4. Law and order situation, wheat scam, bank piracy all speak of the government's inefficiency. There can be no excuse.

5. There is no endeavour to brighten up the government's image. Mud-slinging and narrowness will only pull us down further. The leaders portray a comic figure to the outside world. Remember we are the most corrupt nation.

The government failed to generate hope in any sector.

The opposition is naive, negative and coward. Once again they proved their failure as party in power and as opposition.

Tanzia Chowdhury  
Dhaka

## Don't lose hope

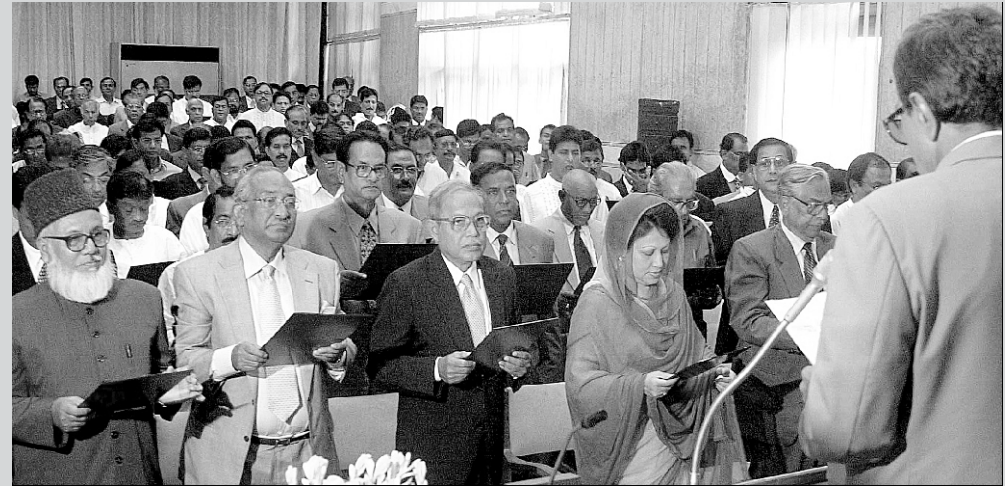
The present government definitely deserve some credit, considering the fact that it inherited a shattered economy (the foreign exchange reserve was at its lowest), deteriorating law and order situation, a highly politicised police and administration and overall mismanagement and misrule.

Against that backdrop, BNP has taken some bold decisions and has been successful, such as, banning polythene bags, phasing out rickshaws, closing down AJM etc.

Regarding law and order situation, the present government has taken some bold steps to make the administration free from politics. Did some quick trials of many sensational murder cases, trying to revamp the administration including the police. This is a very hard and difficult task indeed where there is no cooperation from the opposition.

The biggest failure so far is their inability or inaction to try the corrupt political leaders, high officials and

## Not so happy anniversary



Miles to go...

BNP should not celebrate October 10th as the 1st anniversary of "silent vote revolution" but mark it as one of "all-out failure, corruption and lies".

This BNP government has brought the country to the verge of ruin. I and many others thought that things could not get any worse than they were under the last regime, but this BNP-Jamaat alliance have made things far more terrible. Students are being killed, women raped, children kidnapped, minorities purged, opposition workers tortured, private television stations closed, ministers are taking bribes openly and the judiciary is totally politicised. Whatever happened to the pledges of independent judiciary and the autonomy for the electronic media? There have been all kinds of

corruption— the Danish scam and the Wheat scam to name just a few. Students cannot go to classes without falling prey to JCD cadres' gunfire.

Every now and then Khaleda Zia makes noise about impending cabinet reshuffle but this has turned out to be another one in her bag of tricks and lies. She wants us to believe that the AL is responsible for everything that is wrong in Bangladesh today— what does she think of ourselves? Instead of spending millions of dollars from public funds to mark their anniversary of coming to power BNP should hide in shame for their total abject failure to fulfil any of their many election pledges!

Shejuti Khan  
Dhaka

## anniversary

It's been one year since BNP has been voted to power.

To say that it has been a tumultuous time would be an understatement. Although voted into office with so much hope, BNP has managed to disappoint in every respect. The government showed its colours pretty early with the pogrom of the minorities and the random use of sedition laws against its critics. It has kept up the poor show with the ousting of the President, the attack on BUET and DU, worsening theft and corruption at Titas, the Wheat Scam and the over all decline in the law and order situation.

The antics of Lutfuzzaman Babar and the beer sellers, the Home Minister and his philosophies, the warbling of Saifur Rahman and the demolition of Dr. Moyeen Khan, have been just about the only action in

deterioration of law and order situation, nepotism etc. They opted for a regime change and voted for BNP led 4-party alliance as their election pledges coincided with exactly what the people were longing for.

But after BNP came to power they took least initiative to fulfil their election pledges. Or else, they would have taken a firm stand to provide security to general people and curb lawlessness at any cost.

The present government has violated the post of President by ousting Prof. B. Chowdhury from the post. At the same time the BNP has smeared its own image with the narrow confines of political whims. Incidents at DU and BUET, and the restriction of public gathering at the Central Shaheed Minar have also eroded the image of the government.

At the end of the last AL government, TI graded Bangladesh as the

indeed taken a bold step by closing the Adamjee Jute Mills. Ban on polythene bags and air-polluting two-stroke three-wheelers are also positive and timely steps taken by the government.

Islam  
Tangail

After March 25 1971, a foreign journalist was reporting, "President Yahya has devastated his own country..." I can say, after 01 October 2001, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and her government have devastated her own country.

One-year rule of Khaleda Zia's government is full of killing, raping, snatching, corruption and shooting up commodity prices. People have seen the attack on minorities, unprecedented mid-night attack at Shamsunnahar Hall and closing of DU, Sony's killing and closing of BUET, cease of Shaheed Minar,

## The opposition at fault!



Blame it on the opposition?

It's really quite useless to discuss the failures and successes of the present government because whenever something goes right the government tries to bag all the credit and whenever something goes wrong, they blame it on the opposition. The most pathetic thing about our government is their constant denial of the truth and their reluctance to take any responsibility for their misdeeds. Whenever they fail to handle a situation, they quickly point out that there is a conspiracy going on. Whenever the opposition protests against anything, they are accused of trying to take advantage of the situation and misleading people.

Maybe we didn't make such a big blunder by voting for BNP and their allies. After all, they do have the very best intentions to serve the country, stop terrorism, restore law and order, and boost the economy. It's just that the opposition who doesn't let them fulfil their intentions.

S Hossain  
University of Dhaka

others against whom specific corruption and murder charges were brought and charge sheet submitted.

Finally, we can say that the government has yet to deliver or live up to the expectation of the majority people but we have no doubt about their sincerity unlike that of their predecessors.

Nasir  
On e-mail  
The coalition's

this cabinet. To be fair, AL has amply proven the last year that it is very much the same totalitarian, idol worshipping party it always was. And this cabinet is not much worse (or better) than the one with Nasim, Moni and that lot.

Is this to be our fate?  
Azad, Dhaka

At the end of the last AL government, people became really exhausted and annoyed because of

most corrupt nation in the world. The BNP then claimed that if they were voted to power they would make the government transparent and accountable and soon in future Bangladesh will be selected the most corrupt-free country in the world. This year we have again secured the position of the most corrupt nation!

It will be unwise not to say something about the positive and impressive steps taken by the government. The present government has

wheat scandal, etc. Also people have seen how BNP-Jamat turned down the Head of the State. This government could not show the people a flash of light so that they can keep hope for tomorrow.

BNP-Jamat government had electoral promise that they will separate the judicial department from government administration and to restrain terrorism. Now the terrorism is at extreme degree and separation of judiciary is in quibble.

There is no way to observe the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the regime, but to give the explanations to the people of their futility.

I am sorry, there is nothing I found that could go for the credit of the government  
S. Alam, Zambia

There is very little to say about the first year of the new government. Still less about something good that has happened to anyone not directly connected with the people in power. What we see do not bring any joy to our mind. Leaders in the government (or the parties) always tried to justify any wrong deed by saying that the same happened during the days of AL! Alas they forget the consequence brought about to the perpetrators of earlier misdeeds.

Even senior ministers who are considered as nice persons talk in the same vein. It is painful to see responsible people speaking untruths or distorting truths to suit them. Does it not occur to them that a lasting impression is created on people's mind when they find a very respectable leader giving an incorrect statement or twisting a truth? This government has indeed done some good work, but those are

tainted with allegation of corrupt and irregular practices. An example is the release of large number of criminals together with party members who were victimised by the previous government. Another, as reported in the press and not refuted, is the exemption of loan and interest of close relatives.

An earlier practice of politicising all spheres of social activities gained momentum during last one year. A glaring example is sports. I have seen plenty of opinions in this column about the rot in our cricket standard. But very few have mentioned change in the management of the game. Our cricket had to start from zero after the last general election ignoring all past achievements, however small that may be.

MAH, Green Road, Dhaka

## Happy birthday!

To go inside the deep of politics of a country like Bangladesh where corruption, decay and disorder are intrinsic to its very core culture is like finding oneself in the quagmire of confusion and hopelessness. Here, the proverbial 'Present Government' is always the epitome of angel with Maidaas Touch that can turn even a squalid trash into gold and the 'Ex-Government' (read 'the opposition') is presumably in the CIA's most wanted list!

Here the politicians are the ones who sworn in just to get cursed out. Where 70% population cannot even read or write, politics is a mere form of unquestionable answer.

The government needs to empathise that the mass people do not really want to understand the complicated intricacy of politics. What they want is to go by their normal lives with relative peace and harmony. Ensuring this would give any government enough credit to remain in their power for ages.

But a mere look at the dailies gives a very grim situation of law and order state of the country. Not a day goes by where at least 80% of the news are not smeared with the blood of innocent victims and the rest 20% are either classified or cross word puzzles. People have been forced to abandon their sense of safety and the assurance to die peacefully in this land of chaos.

And statistically this situation is degenerating day by day. Government, for the last one year has done very little within its power to calm the situation and to everybody's dismay, they have even sheltered criminals and have gone to the extent of nominating them for the post of ward commissioners and MPs.

I do not know why, it has become a practice to discredit the ex-government when someone assumes power. Backbiting and scandalising seem to occupy most of the time our parliamentarians spend in the Sangsad. We put one step forward and two steps back and this is no good a strategy for advancement. Every government has its contribution. Wouldn't it be decent to pay a little homage to the predecessors for their jobs well done?

The positive contributions of the government can be found in any partisan national daily, well articulated and widely covered but what matters most are the exposures of cons, the weaknesses, the not-so-good jobs that open up rooms for improvements. There is no scope and time for complacency and believe that what they deliver is perfect panacea for all the diseases.

A Concerned Citizen, Dhaka

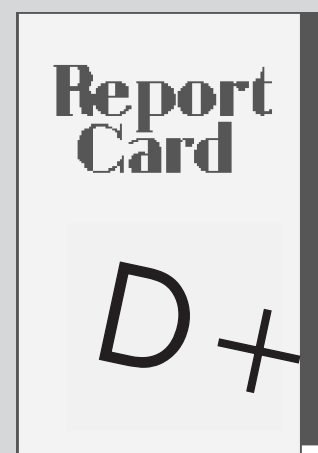
## Many fiestas

Even the whole world knows that the manifesto of any Bangladeshi political party is just an eyewash. Actually two basic types of manifestos are followed in Bangladesh (a) As a ruling party, and (b) As an opposition party. I reckon the really practised manifesto of the ruling party as fiesta for them as follows—

- (1) Immediately forgetting everything written in the election manifesto.
  - (2) Capturing the state run media.
  - (3) Axe personnel of the opposition party from all important governmental position.
  - (4) Appoint favourable ones of the party, by the party and for the Party.
  - (5) Stop all the good work that the past government has been initiated.
  - (6) Foremost and most essentially ensure individual economical growth for all the persons involved with the ruling party.
  - (7) Become deaf sporadically to pass up the criticisms from any opposite or neutral source.
  - (8) Blame previous government 100% for the current socio-economical disintegration.
  - (9) Never ever admit that any mistake has been made by the ruling party.
- The opposition party act as follows:
- (1) Oppose and criticise every thing the ruling party does.
  - (2) Demand re-election or new election every now and then.
  - (3) Seek issues to call haltal.

M. S. Hamid (Bobby)  
Old DOHS, Dhaka

## Annual report card of the coalition government



Good, bad, indifferent?

After a year in the office, it's time to scrutinise the performance of the BNP led 4-party alliance government. So, let's take a look at their report card and see how they are doing in the most critical subjects:

Subject: Law and order; Grade: F

Comment: Failed miserably on the number one issue of the country, cannot protect own ward-commissioners let alone the general people.

Subject: Environment; Grade: B

Comment: Thanks for removing polythene bags and 2-stroke auto-rickshaws; need to work on land encroachment and saving forests and hills.

Subject: Macro-economics; Grade: B

Comment: Man with the Sylheti accent increases remittance but needs to meet high revenue collection projected in the budget.

Subject: Checking Corruption; Grade: F

Comment: Chosen the most corrupt nation by TI, wheat scam

will help to maintain the number one position next year.

Subject: Communication; Grade: A

Comment: Thanks to the big man, things are getting done or in the process— Bhairab bridge, flyover, Asian highway, removing 2-stroke auto-rickshaws etc.

Subject: Freedom of press; Grade: D

Comment: No Tipu Sultan this year but shutting down of ETV and banning cable channels for 24 hours earned bad grades.

Subject: Governance and leadership; Grade: D

Comment: Who's calling the shots? PMO or Hawa Bhaban?

Subject: Price of essentials; Grade: D

Comment: Utility, vegetables everything is up.

Subject: Health; Grade: F

Comment: Fails to do anything regarding Dengue

Subject: Education; Grade: D

Comment: Checks copying in SSC and HSC exams, supplies textbook on time but shuts down BUET and DU on partisan politics.

Overall Grade: D

Comment: Need to work really hard on the Fs, otherwise another ballot revolution is just 4 years away.

KM, Dhaka

BNP and the 4-party alliance have made a good start with its first year performance. Major successes are:

Economy:

a. Foreign Exchange Reserve boosted up from a little over one billion dollar to about 1.8 billion dollar.

b. Remittance by expatriate Bangladeshis has increased by about 35%.

c. Unnecessary import curtailed and there is impressive increase in the import of capital machinery and industrial raw material.

d. Revenue income is little over target.

e. Adamjee Jute Mills closed and a staggering loss stopped.

Environment:

a. Poly shopping bags eliminated.

b. Polluting 2-stroke three wheelers taken off the streets of Dhaka.

c. Vintage vehicles over twenty years banned.

Education:

a. Education up to HSC is made free for girls.

b. Primary school students are getting stipends.

Failures:

There is no state sponsored terrorism or political godfather for criminals. The government has shown its sincerity by arresting a party MP, youth and student front activists connected with alleged crimes. But even then the incidence of crime is increasing. Wheat scam is another blot in the governance of the country.

The overall performance of the government is satisfactory.

QSAhmed, Dhaka