

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.

## BC's interview with BBC

Former president BC's press interview with BBC, aired on February 3 in BBC Asia Today, attracted my attention. As always, he was very articulate. But when he was highlighting the failures of the AL and the BNP governments in tackling law and order, corruption and poverty alleviation, the interviewer really had him cornered when he asked the former President what he had done to address these issues when he himself held important positions in the BNP government. BC's answer sounded very lame when he said that he could not do anything because in Bangladesh, politics centred around one person, and in this case, presumably, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. What BC told the

politics in order. Public memory is short but let me remind the former President that it is not that short. During his brief tenure as President, he was cutting tapes by the dozens every day; talking and sermonising on politics that were, as a ceremonial president, not within his jurisdiction at all. He was finding faults with his government in public, embarrassing it in the process. He was, as they say in politics, cut to size when he was shown the door. Any other party would have done to him what the BNP did. As a third power, BC must prove to the public much more and just not sweet talk. As a member of the public, I hope those who are with the BNP and AL take lesson from BC's revelations and work with their leaders and establish democracy within the party first. Otherwise they would be working in putting

every time we asked a question in the class he shouted, "Why are you confusing everybody?"

During our third year practical laboratory we used to see every day that while doing the lab works, the teachers gossip. If you ask a question, the answer would be, "See the manual." After three years of this sort of practice we eventually graduated. I came to know that this scenario is still unaltered.

There is no teaching evaluation system in the institution. The teachers were very enthusiastic about increasing the tuition fees but are very reluctant to face any sort of evaluation. On top of this, one teacher promised explicitly (others maintain this attitude implicitly) not to give us more than 80 per cent marks. The result is even the first boy or the girl in the class is bound to

made by the venerable leader of the opposition has no other dimension. It looks like she is angry. The allegations she levelled against the media are no different from the Leader of the House who is also looking for scapegoats to cover for her failings. On the other hand I find the remarks she made against the press comparing it with the times she was in the government are full of invectives and certainly not reflective of the whole truth.

The hallmark of our political hierarchy is arrogance both in action and speech. Coming directly to the issue at stake, as a keen observer of political events for nearly three decades I most humbly wish to point out that if one were to identify three major causes of Awami League's victory in the last elections it would be – the support of the media, the NGOs, and a very important segment of the intelligentsia, exactly in the same order of priority. Therefore the allegations of the Leader of the Opposition against the media are not only baseless but also "unkind." It is my impression that even to this day the media

has a marked tendency to be more favourably disposed towards the opposition than the government. **Shamsher Chowdhury**  
Dhaka

## Shopping centres of Dhaka

Please refer to Dr Mahbubur Rahman's post mortem (Jan 26) of an article on above mentioned title in the 'Urban Agenda' pages (Feb 1).

It is a historical fact with sufficient evidence that Dhaka's oldest part is the present Banglabazar area within the confines of the now filled up 'Dulai river' and 'Buriganga river.' A channel was dug later to connect Dulai river (Dholai Khal) with Buriganga river. Though the article is full of errors yet, my point here is not to scrutinise further 'the article' and the 'opinion' but to say that 'Urban Agenda' pages normally cater to non-researched amateurish writings. The article under Dr Rahman's wrath would have gone to some peer-reviewed journal instead of 'Urban Agenda' pages had it been a properly researched one. Nothing can be achieved by discussing such articles; Dr Rahman instead may enlighten the readers by writing popular serials in the newspaper.

**SU Ahmed**  
M. Phil Student, Dept. of Geography and Environment  
Dhaka University, Ramna, Dhaka

## Padma Bridge: Site selection

JICA have finally chosen two important points for the construction of the country's longest bridge. One is at Mawa-Jinjira and the other at Paturia-Golando point. If the bridge could be constructed at Mawa-Jinjira point, the following suitable and important benefits will accrue to the whole nation:

1. Nearly two crore 66 lakh people will be directly or indirectly benefited.
2. At present more than five thousand vehicles are crossing everyday at Mawa point.
3. Almost 21 South and South-Western districts' inhabitants will be benefited.
4. If four-lane bridge is being constructed with Railway Provision the total approximate cost of this bridge will be Tk 5605 crore; alternatively

if it is made at Paturia-Golando point it would cost around TK 6488 crore.

5. Last but not the least, the distances will be shorter; to Khulna 116 kilometre, Narail 90, Jessore 66, Mongla Port 145, and Barisal 90 kilometres. In view of above there is no alternative but to build this mighty bridge at Mawa-Jinjira point for the benefit of the much neglected people of Southern region. We all hope ministries concerned, JICA and all affiliated parties concerned will uphold the cherished desire of the people of this region.

**Shahid Hossain**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Get Aktel, get "network busy"

"Get Aktel, get mobile" is the promise that Aktel, the supposedly second largest mobile phone provider makes in their add; but to me it is more like "Get Aktel, get 'network busy' message." After a long wait in queue (some people came even before the office opened in the morning) and much unpleasant excitement, I finally managed to become a "proud" owner of the much vaunted Ashol Phone (during the first leg of distribution in December 2003). I felt like I have conquered the Everest because there were other less fortunate people who could not compete the elbow-hitting fight of getting a form for the phone. (As the officials did not like the queue and decided gave the form to competent fighters with strong elbows.)

I was more or less satisfied with the service, but for the last couple of months all I am getting is a flurry of "no reply" and "network busy" messages whenever I try to make a call and my friends and relatives wonder if I always leave my mobile set turned off, because they get the same message. The authority has not yet bothered to give any explanation of the sorry state of their network.

First I thought something was wrong with my mobile set, but it turned out to be alright and some friends of mine who happen to be the "valid" users of Aktel were facing the same problem. I got particularly annoyed during this Eid season. I failed to contact my friends and relatives who know that I own a mobile of the second largest mobile phone provider in Bangladesh. My mobile set is now nothing better than a cheap child's toy that is sold in the footpath. Now may I ask the authority that do you really care for your "valid" customers, will there be any explanation or will there be any end to this problem or should I buy another SIM of a different mobile service provider?

I just hope the customer "care" service cares to answer these queries.

**Saif**  
Dhaka

## Ahmadiyya Muslims in Bangladesh

First of all I would like to thank you and your team for giving us excellent coverage of Ahmadiyya Muslims in Bangladesh and the recent atrocities.

I would just like to express my utmost disgust with the current state of affairs in Bangladesh. It seems that Bangladesh has finally given in to the mullahs of Pakistan and those associated with the Taliban regime.



PHOTO: AFP

## Lord Hutton's Report

Like most Britons, many people around the world were also looking forward with keen interest to see the result of good old British justice and the Hutton Report must have been a great disappointment for all. It does not at all seem fair and right as to how the renowned judge blamed the BBC editorial management for all the wrongdoings thus allowed Blair and his government to go scot-free. The way, the Chairman, Director-General and the concerned journalist of that great media-network, always known from inception for its fair/truthful broadcasts world-wide, resigned, without show of remorse, ought to make the position even worse.

The BBC and those people known to be in no way of less importance than the learned Lord Justice Hutton may indeed open the Pandora's box eventually to blame him and Tony Blair for the apparent white-washing they now managed to accomplish. Although Lord Hutton in his report mentioned about his specific terms of reference not to cover finding the cause of any wrong-doing for going to war in Iraq or any other connection in that regard, how in his wisdom does he ignore the fact that Dr. Kelly's death is only a bi-product of that unjust war against majority of world public opinion as well as that of his own countrymen. Looking back at the proceedings taken of this interesting case to the extent whatever was published in both media-news and electronic-media, it never looked that the end result could be so controversial and as bad as it now looks. Time will certainly tell what will be the effect of this to the future of BBC, the greatest of the institutions of its kind, revered by every one for its impartial news casting and comments.

The whole thing does appear to be no different from the way Bush was elected as US president, in stark as well as inglorious preference to Al Gore that has probably been root cause for so much of untold miseries to the people of Iraq now in progress and also to the order and peace in

this planet since that unforgettable US supreme court judgement! This in no way is to be construed as any regret for the downfall of that cruel tyrant Saddam who is equally responsible for perpetrating all the wrongs to his own people before Bush and Blair embarked on that unjust war.

As for our country's many investigations; only few see the light of the day and in each of those cases the people at fault like ministers or high-officials never voluntarily resign or take any responsibility like the brave people in the BBC have done. Despite everything that is happening in the world, in our region and in our own country in the aftermath of the sad dissolution of the Soviet Union leading to the current single super-power universe no one should be surprised or have any doubt as to the grim turn of event, unpredictable or unthinkable as it may look with in a country or as an evil international development unless sane leaderships replace the insane ones every where including US and Bangladesh.

**Z Rahman**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

## Hutton whitewash

Ultimately, the probe report on the demise of Dr David Kelly delved into by Lord Hutton has been disclosed. All were very agog to know about the report. Many people across the globe thought that Tony Blair would be indicted in this report. But the findings perplexed all. Mr Hutton cleared Tony Blair and charged the BBC for its imbecile reporting. Mr Tony Blair has overcome his ordeal. He was accused of doctoring the dossier on Iraq's WMD to justify the War on Iraq. Mr Hutton pilloried Andrew Gilligan of the BBC. I think the findings of Mr Hutton need to be probed. His report is not only sceptical but also partisan.

**Molla Mohammad Shaheen**  
Dept. of English, Dhaka University

interviewer about Bangladesh's politics centring round one person is no doubt true. It has been so in Bangladesh's politics from day one. What is not understandable is why BC, with all his high credentials, went along with his leader for so long knowing that he had no power with her at the helm. Not only that, BC even lobbied to get for himself the office of President knowing there he would not even have the little reflected power that he enjoyed as a senior minister and BNP leader. Talking of dynastic politics, BC has one waiting in the wings in his son, who entered politics in the seat he vacated after becoming President. While going fully with BC's views on the ill nature of our politics, I feel angered that people like him upon whom the public who voted BNP to power put so much faith to work within the BNP to make it live to people's expectations is now aiming to destroy the BNP without proving even faintly that while in the BNP he had tried at all in setting BNP's

their carts before their horses. **Shahjahan Ahmed**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Teaching: Dhaka University style

We all know that education is the backbone of a nation. We have a long history of evaluating the learned. But regrettably, this is not true anymore. A nation's status of education can be understood easily when you look at the national universities and their science departments. As I have passed recently from Dhaka University, let me talk about my department for example. The number of dedicated teachers can be counted on one's fingers. Most of them are not at all interested in teaching; some are busy with party politics, and some are busy during constancy and only drop into the university just before the class starts. For example, we were taught 'solid state physics' by a teacher who has this 'NGO' business and

get less than the mentioned unless you flatter the teachers very much.

We need a change in this system if we are ever to compete in the modern world.

**Md Masrur Hossain**  
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

## Hasina criticises the press

I have read with keen interest a lead news report published in the DS (Jan 29). I am neither a political analyst nor have any real interest in the current brand of 'politics and politicking' Bangladeshi style. It is neither democracy in action nor is it benevolent dictatorship and hence when one speaks of such lofty issues like freedom of the press, human rights, etc I get totally confused. My understanding of the civil society and politicians of this country is that most of them operate on the basis of individual agenda only. I therefore feel that the statement

## Blair and Bush: Nobel nominees?

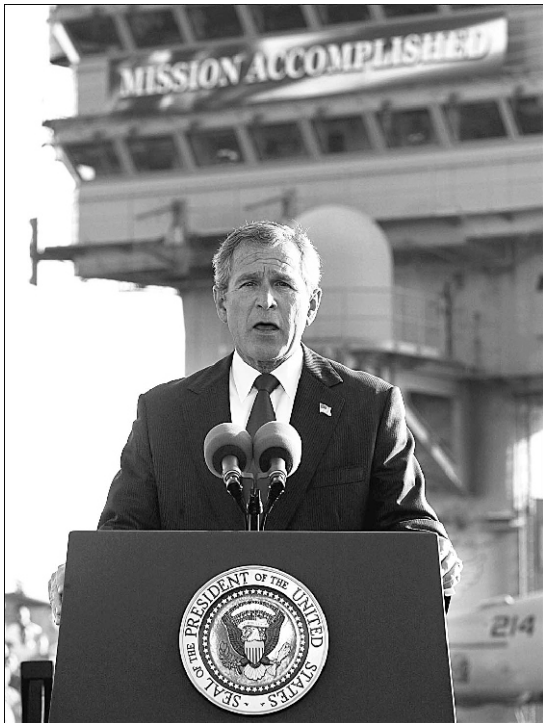


PHOTO: AFP

The messengers of peace!

I know it has only been a month since the year 2004 began. But I think I have already heard the biggest joke of the year: Blair and Bush nominated for Nobel Peace Prize (DS, 31 Jan)! Awarding Nobel to these two gentlemen is all fine. But the only thing I don't understand is, what for? As I write this letter, Bush is on TV saying, "I want to know the facts." He invaded a sovereign country, killed countless numbers of Iraqi women and children; and now he says he wants to know the facts! Amazing stuff. If he didn't know the facts, why did he go to war?

First, Blair and Bush get their prize from the UN, with a lot of help from none other than Kofi Annan. And now we are talking about giving them a Nobel Prize? What kind of a signal are we sending? Are we saying that, if you murder people, if you insult the UN, if you use banned weapons on civilians and if you invade countries without even bothering to know the "facts"; we will reward you with a Nobel Prize? What an absolute load of garbage.

If the Nobel Foundation is so mad about tossing out its prestigious awards, I would like to nominate

my cat Misu Miah in the contest! Why, you might ask, with sheer outrage. Well, he goes out at night and kills lots of mice. As a result, there are no mice ruining any furniture and making noise in our neighbours' houses. Because of my cat, some people in my street are sleeping peacefully! Now this is what I call a serious contribution to peace; wouldn't you agree? What's more, my cat is fully aware of all his facts and his territories!

**Azad Miah**  
Oldham, UK

In my opinion Bangladesh should ask itself this, is Pakistan really a good example to follow? What has Pakistan achieved since its separation from India? Do the vast majority of people of Pakistan really represent what an Islamic country should be like? Did Pakistan's efforts in repressing the peaceful Ahmadiyya Muslims really achieve its objects?

In my mind, the current actions of the Bangladeshi government are really tarnishing its image of being a tolerant country, where the government offers protection to all its inhabitants no matter of colour, creed or religion. What good will banning a religious minority do? Help the Premier and her party stay in power?

This stupidity simply doesn't work. What would happen if the nations of the west started following in this direction. Ban all religious minorities in practising their religion. I mean the recent example of France has caused uproar in the Muslim community, yet it is OK for the so called Muslims to have double standards when it comes to their motherlands.

It is interesting to note that throughout the numerous acts of violence against the Ahmadiyya, they have not retaliated. They have not sent suicide bombers to attack those whom are causing them grief. They have not even uttered foul words. Instead you notice they are still behaving peacefully, with trust in Allah, and with loyalty to their motherland. The same as they acted in Pakistan when similar acts were being carried by its government and people.

To any outsider, the peaceful nature of the Ahmadiyya community really portrays the true message of Islam. I think that Bangladesh can really learn from these people, and maybe they too will adopt the motto of the Ahmadiyya "Love for all, hatred for none."

**Nauman Khwaja**  
London, UK

## Questions

I got some of the questions regarding current affairs of Bangladesh. As

I live abroad I am worried about the following issues. I don't know when Allah will relieve us from these evils.

Haj for MP's and other by government expense: For the last couple of month I have been searching the answers whether it is possible to be kobl of Haj by the public expense what the MP's and others are practising for years in Bangladesh. So far I know the pre-requisition of Haj is to earn Halal money. The thing is that the money used for them are either the tax paid by the people or its a foreign debt in perspective of Bangladesh. Suppose as a taxpayer and citizen of Bangladesh I don't want my money to be used for Haj expenses for them. As the money they are using got a fraction of my tax I don't think that Allah will kobl the Haj. Also in my view, it's misuse of public fund and for that I demand accountability on the Judgement Day for them through Allah.

Ahmadiyya problem: The question is why does a parliament need to declare that a certain group is non-Muslim. A parliament is not a religious organisation and the MP's are not elected to handle that issue. So in the ethical sense the parliament has no right to declare a group to be Muslim or non-Muslim. I have observed that Jamat and some other groups are trying to draw the attention of people to less important issues that are totally unrelated to the development of country. When I was a student of the Islamic University, I saw many members of Shibir humiliated other groups even though they were Muslims and members of other Islamic parties. Sometimes they said that Tabligue Jamat (non-political) is not an Islamic organisation.

May I know how and who has given them the right to make such judgements. As a part of the government, Jamat is trying to divert the focus of the people to issues that are not important at all. Surprisingly they hardly talk about the law and order situation of the country.

**Rima**  
On e-mail

## Life

Imagine your sister, or wife, or a friend or any person (female) you know has woken up early morning looking forward to another day in her life. She cuddles her two year old boy who has just woken up from sleep and in a sour mood (a characteristic of two year olds after a sombre). Her husband is working abroad but he will be back soon. She smiles at the thought of his return, he will be bringing all the beautiful jewellery and saris that he promised her and how happy will his son be to see his dad after such a long time. It was such a wonderful life she was living, with this happy thought she goes to the kitchen to prepare breakfast. At this point I must interrupt, though I am not a writer I have tried to visualise (maybe very poorly) what happened in the house of Zahrul Islam Hafiz on Tuesday morning.

On that night his wife was raped by four strangers who then strangled her to death. They beat her two year old boy senseless and confined her domestic help. The incident is simply unbearable. I cannot imagine the depth of pain, sorrow and helplessness she felt before her death.

After writing this column I will go on with my usual daily life and so will you. And I know that I will see it again -- in the same newspaper, the same crime but another human being. Look at the past newspapers you will find similarity in the news, only the victims differ. And if you sum up the whole thing there is another woman who at present is going on with her daily life (feeling happy and wonderful) without the knowledge that she will be the victim of violation and murder.

"Can I do something?" It is the question that you should ask yourself. Our society has for too long taking steps backward to avoid crime but now its has reached a corner. It's time to choose an answer.

**Md. Tareque**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka