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## Who is to blame?

Almost every day BNP leaders are talking about anarchy and they are claiming that the opposition parties are out to create a chaotic situation in the country. Of course they do not forget to mention about the involvement of foreign hands in the conspiracy against the government.

The recent hartals and other opposition protests started after the killing of SAMS Kibria. Police have chargesheeted 10 BNP men for their involvement in the killing. Now who is instigating opposition protest?

The government should not expect that the opposition will be victimised and at the same time it will keep mum! After every killing, from Ahsan Ullah Master to SAMS Kibria, the government blamed opposition but its own men have been chargesheeted.

I think it is the government that is creating anarchy, not the opposition. It is now proved that the opposition is not killing its own men to create an issue for movement.

**Nafees Ahmed**  
Dhanmondi  
Dhaka

### Criticism is good for democracy!

The ruling coalition loves to ignore its own stubborn attitude when it comes to intimidating the opposition and the press. Lately, the dwindling donors are also becoming a nuisance for Bangladesh government because the donors would like to know how their money is spent and whether basic human rights of all citizens are protected, irrespective of their races and religions. Much of the foreign criticism could have been easily addressed without public knowing about it. But, that is not the way things are happening in Bangladesh.

I am pretty sure that foreign diplomats have tried discreetly to convey their concerns to Bangladesh government but nobody really cared about their concern. So, the laundry is being washed in the public arena much to our government's embarrassment. Nobody should expect that the donors would sit on the sidelines and attach no string to their taxpayers' money. Those days are over! Transparency is required both from donor and recipient countries! Like many other developing countries, Bangladesh does need foreign inputs and investments to make peoples' lives better! We are not ready to do it alone! Not yet!

**Dev**

Boston University, US

### Student politics

Generally, the politics in which the students play the main role is known to us as student politics. In Bangladesh student politics exists in a vibrant form. But can we claim that

it is on the right track? I am sorry to say that the present student politics of Bangladesh is quite detrimental to society. It needs total overhauling. Brilliant students have to come to the field of politics.

Let's go back to history. In 1952, 1969 and 1971 students played a vital role to save our language and motherland. At that time student politics was used for the welfare of the country.

But the situation has changed to a great extent. Student politics does not any longer have the objectives that it had in the past.

**Sadat Shahriar**  
EEE, RUET, Rajshahi

### Ban on smoking

The news of ban on smoking is definitely good news for the non-smokers and it's a timely initiative of the government. It will give a good feeling to the non-smokers and from now on they can take full breath in the public transports, and in common places.

I had an opportunity to view a TV programme organised by "Adhunik" where Dr. Badrudduza Chowdhury was the main speaker. In the discussion, he told the audience that nobody could identify a single merit of smoking. He mentioned a lot of demerits of smoking--cancer, heart disease, etc.

In fact, it is hard for the people to quit smoking, particularly those habituated since long and in practice we find different pictures in our society. The government is receiving huge revenue from tobacco manufacturing companies and the amount is increasing every year. It indicates the increasing rate of tobacco users in the country as well.

In the business community, most of the senior executives and especially the sales and marketing people are smokers. I know some prominent physicians who have this habit as well. I asked one of my friends in this group and he gave me some idea. The addicted feel compelled to smoke when they are in mental anxiety or in a relaxed mood. Actually it is a kind of mental dependence.

Smoking also has a social aspect. People try to befriend others through offering a cigarette. That is an age-old ploy.

Whatever the philosophy behind smoking is, this ban will have a significant impact on the future generation. But our law-enforcing agencies should be honest to avoid any abuse of the law and unwanted harassment of innocent people.

**Zahir U. Hyder**  
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We have to look forward to the cocoon of a problem before solving it. For example, we cannot get any benefit from spending a lot of money in educational reforms unless we are aware of the problem of copying. Similarly, we cannot be successful in controlling addiction unless local production of alcohol is stopped.

The ban on smoking in public places is a praiseworthy step, but it has to be enforced strictly.  
**Senjuti Shuvo Ahmed**  
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### Why this demand ?

We are getting exasperated by the whims of the Awami League. From time to time they are placing demands of one sort or the other, most of which are unreasonable. They are abstaining from the JS and resorting to hartal frequently which is very inconvenient to the people and harmful to the country.

Now they are demanding reforms in the caretaker government, it is really ridiculous because the formation of a caretaker government was Awami League's idea and they were happy with it, then why it has become necessary to make changes? Is it because they lost the last general election?

Everyone knows that the election had been free and fair, the caretaker government had conducted it efficiently, people were pleased and thankful to those who were in charge.

But the Awami League was not happy, it started saying that there had been massive rigging and at first refused to accept the results; the oath taking ceremony had to be re-scheduled a few times because Sheikh Hasina was not cooperating.

So, we want to ask-- does the caretaker government's credibility depend on which party wins the election? If the Awami League wins, it is free and fair!  
**Nur Jahan, Chittagong**

### News and views

Dhaka: Taka erodes by 52 per cent against US dollar in 10 years.

Would the BNP and AL leaders kindly elaborate and explain?

Dhaka: Bangabir Kader Siddiqui requests Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to sit with the opposition.

He may also kindly request Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina to sit with govt leaders.

Rangamati: Jana Sanghati Samity Chairman Shantu Lama is dreaming to play the role of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The dream will never be fulfilled.

Dhaka: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia visits ailing Awami League Presidium member and former foreign minister Abdus Samad Azad at hospital.

Has the Opposition Leader ever visited any BNP leader in hospital? Islamabad: President Musharraf to watch Indo-Pak cricket match in India.

When and where the peoples of India and Pakistan will see the final match of Kashmir?

Dhaka: BSF violates 1975 Indira Mujib border guideline.

Arrogance is the second nature of India.

**OH Kabir**  
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### Telecom Arabiya 2005

Bangladesh participated in Telecom Arabiya 2005, the largest telecommunications and information technology show in the Gulf, eyeing the unexplored Middle East market of software products and services.

The show kicked off in the Bahrain capital of Manama and ran up to March 23 on the occasion of the 3rd Asian IT ministers' summit in the gulf kingdom.

The minister for science and ICT, Abdul Moin Khan, led a government delegation at the summit, while a team of private sector ICT leaders have also joined the show with an array of Bangladeshi ICT products and services.

For the first time, the country's three leading ICT associations-

The show will give local software developers a wider scope for establishing new contacts and exploring market in the Gulf States.

The software industry has recorded more than 122 per cent growth rate in the first six months (July-December, 2004) of the current fiscal year (FY 04/05) with export worth \$5.29 million, according to latest statistics of the Bangladesh Bank.

More than 50 local software and IT service companies are currently exporting their services to 30 countries.

**Nashir Uddin, On e-mail**

### Textile deal

The International Textile Deal ended on the 31st of December last year. After years of knowing this would happen, are we as a country prepared to deal with a drastic change in one of our most profitable industries? The end of the deal will in turn allow other countries to gain textile deals that Bangladesh due to its size and lack of preparation will be hard pressed to obtain.

fall of this deal would result in a reduction of our exports which will in return have an adverse affect on the employment of these individuals. Our country already has high poverty and the spread between the haves and the have-nots is getting wider by the day. In spite of all the warnings, reports from the Agence France-Presse (BBC News) reflects that the exports have already fallen by 21.34.

With a fall in sales people will lose their jobs and we will have an even higher unemployment rate. With the fall in unemployment rate and increase in poverty, our socio-economic condition will go from bad to worse. The instability that exists now will be far worse as corruption and crime will escalate due to the need to find other means of income for the thousands who are currently employed by the textile industry. Not to mention those members of the middle class society who actually managed to climb up, thanks to the opening of positions in multiple textile mills across the country.

We do not have the Multi Fibre Agreement to protect this industry. It is time the government and the leaders of this industry take notice and start working towards protecting the livelihood of so many people. We already have a budget deficit. We can't continue or afford to move further down the negative scale.

**Zeenat Z. Syed**  
Business Analyst, Dhaka

### WB call

I find the news article "WB calls for wholesale trade liberalisation, (11<sup>th</sup> March)" very much interesting. I support the carefully selected spectral liberalisation. The liberalisation should be reciprocal and not blanket. The basis of reciprocity also should be measured relatively, not flatly. For example, if a supplier country already has a huge trade balance with Bangladesh, as far as the particular supplier country is concerned the terms of trade is already liberal to the favour of the net-exporter-country (NEC). No further liberalisation is warranted to the favour of NEC. Again let's say a net-exporter-country relative to Bangladesh is now paying \$100m as duties and taxes, the so-called barriers. Bangladesh can afford to forego this \$100m in duties and taxes provided that the NEC lift all forms of barriers and discrimination to the recruitment of Bangladeshi manpower (both skilled and apprentices) in the process of manufacturing to export giving \$100m in terms of fair share service income from the NEC. In other words, \$100m duties and taxes would eventually be paid in the form of salaries and wages, and corporate taxes to either Bangladeshis or to Bangladesh.

Second example: Let's say in RMG 70% value is imported adding 30% value Bangladesh can export total 100% of the value to take its 30% share returning 70% to the supplying country (SC). Of course in the perspective of management accounting the decision would be to the favour of liberalisation of import of the items constituting the 70% imported value.

**Mahmud, On e-mail**

### Women in the role of Imam

Dr. Amina Wadud's role as an Imam has triggered controversy all over the globe, especially in the Muslim society. That tiny event was full of hype to the western media. The gathering was not even in a mosque, rather a confined space in the vicinity of a Christian Church with tight security and a gathering of media journalists. The followers behind her were a few women and some one hundred men. Her logic to perform as Imam was that " the issue of gender equality is a very important one in Islam, and Muslims have unfortunately used highly restrictive interpretations of history to move backward, with this prayer service we are moving forward. This single act is symbolic of the possibil-



## A perfect Test match

The second Test match between India and Pakistan was a true example of rivalry and hard contest. Before the 5th morning we could not guess which team would win. And those five days we remained glued to TV. The contest gave us a true touch of Indo-Pak rivalry.

As a fan of Indian cricket team, I am very happy to see India winning over their arch rival Pakistan. The batting prowess of Dravid proved that he is the best batsman of India at present. Kumble has also proved that he is a great bowler. The resurgence of

Balajee gives India a potent weapon.

The match once more showed that cricket is a game of great uncertainty. Both the teams slipped from the line after a good start. Shahid Afridi almost broke my heart when he was swashbuckling in the second innings.

Youhana & Younis also produced two great innings.

The match had everything. It was a thriller.

Thank you, both the teams, for the exciting show.

**Solaiman Palash**  
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ities within Islam". From her statement it seems to me that she was talking about Muslim women's rights in Quran and Hadith which have been misinterpreted and manipulated throughout the history of Islam, especially by the male members of society. That is why Muslim women have to be united to regain their lost glory and make their voices heard. This campaigner is known as an 'Islamist feminist' in the contemporary Muslim world. In the countries like Iran and Algeria Islamist feminists are raising their voices about the common Islamic rights of women such as performing prayers five times a day inside a mosque like men. They have clear-cut logic behind this claim, gathering in the mosque is needed not only for performing prayer but for exchanging views to achieve their common social interests which is not possible for any individual woman by remaining confined inside the four walls.

However, certain things are clearly mentioned in the religion and there is perhaps no way to deviate from them. That is why Dr. Wadud sounded more confusing than convincing.

**Md. Harisur Rahman**  
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### An organised crime

A good number of new shining cars are nowadays seen moving in the city roads. Eyes suddenly stop at particular parts of the car where one will feel that something is missing and the whole beauty of the car is spoiled. This is because the members of an organised gang operate in the city to take away the mono-

grams, logos, car names, wipers, car radio antennas and other small spares thus distorting the beauty of the whole car. I myself had a similar problem with my almost new car. I replaced the logo of my car purchasing the same from a spare parts shop near the Scout Bhavan. All the spare parts are taken away by the thieves and sold either at Dholar Khal or at shops near the Scout Bhavan. I strongly believe that the car spare parts lifters have a nexus with the owners/sales persons of those shops. Otherwise, how can one get all the needed spare parts at a higher price?

I would, therefore, request the authorities concerned to place honest and smart plainclothes who would be able to catch these criminals. This organised crime must be stopped.

**Dr. S.M. Rahman**  
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### British textile mills in Comilla EPZ

I would just like to clarify the writer of the letter headed "British textile mills in Comilla EPZ". Let me advise him that, and I get this from your own paper, the "British" company is in fact from the "British Virgin Islands" which can hardly be described as typically "British".

We're not talking of Manchester, Lancashire, Birmingham or like, we are talking of an island many many miles from Great Britain which people use as a Tax Haven. Repeat, it is NOT Great Britain. Whoever is investing is not paying British taxes of that you can be certain.  
**Alan Stepney, On e-mail**

## Auschwitz concentration camp



Children in a holding camp before being sent to Auschwitz. Norwegian civilian Alice Resch helped dozens of these children to leave Europe

Aspet Children's Home  
France  
1941

As the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp passed by (27th January), I eagerly waited for one month to see if someone somewhere in Bangladesh would show the slightest courtesy to hold a little remembrance event. Well I guessed it, nobody would bother, and indeed there wasn't anyone. This shows how strongly anti-Semitism is rooted in our country.

Millions of Jews were murdered during the Second World War, whose fate was the same as ours in 1971.

**Chowdhury Mohibul Hassan**  
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## Violence against women

During the last decade, the number of rape has increased five-fold, acid attacks have increased four-fold, and dowry related oppressions and domestic violence have increased two-fold (IPRSP Document, GOB, 03). Incidents of violence against women are increasing alarming in our country. Women are assaulted inside and outside their homes, workplaces and educational institutions.

In Bangladesh, girls are predominately victims of early marriage, which is one of the root factors that causes violence against women at individual, family, and social levels. The rate of early marriage is high in Bangladesh due to poverty, lack of awareness, lack of birth and marriage registration, religious values, insecurity of women, discrimination of women's property rights etc.



Registration of birth and marriage should be ensured to address early marriage and violence against women. Union Parishad chairpersons, members of "Gram Sarker", social developmental committees, and marriage registrars have a major role to play in preventing early marriage in the locality. The real problem lies in the

implementation of the laws. There is a big gap between the number of incidents and the number of cases filed, which is very significant. The weakest point is that the legal procedure is very formal and time consuming. Most of the people are not aware of the laws. On the other hand, voluntary human rights organisations of

the country are working mostly in urban areas. Therefore people in rural and remote areas are beyond the effective purview of the law.

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