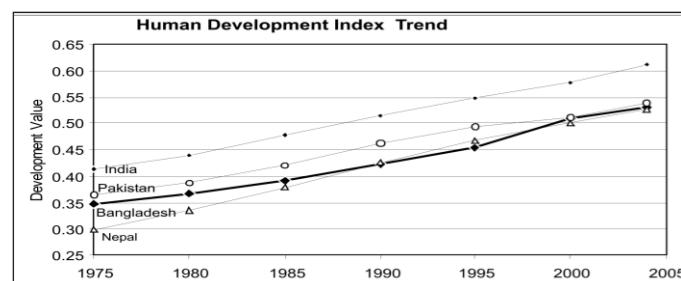


## The dark age of development since 2001

While we were on the way to catch India, we are now competing with Nepal and Pakistan again. In a marathon race you can keep running and still fall behind. During Hasina's tenure we ran about four times faster than Pakistan (Bangladesh 2.5% versus 0.7% of Pakistan), now we are running slower than them (Bangladesh 1.0% versus 1.4% of Pakistan). This is what has happened to Bangladesh in the last five years.



ZAKARIA KHONDKER

Suppose in a village there are a hundred people, and only one rich man. At the end of the year the rich man earned one crore taka to double his net worth. The pundits calculated the GDP growth for the village to be 100%. Are the villagers rich now?

The truth is just the opposite. The other 99 became poorer, and are now squeezed by the spiraling price inflation as the rich man controls all the trade in the village. This is exactly what has happened to Bangladesh since 2001. The cronies of the alliance government have gathered enormous wealth. For example, thousands of crores of taka were squandered in the electric pillar business alone. On the other hand, poor Dipali and Manjuara committed suicide to end the hell of hunger.

This is the problem with GDP growth: it fails to represent the majority when a small section is getting filthy rich in a spectacularly

short period. If most people were living longer, or their education levels had increased, then we could say that the benefits have reached most people, not just a few.

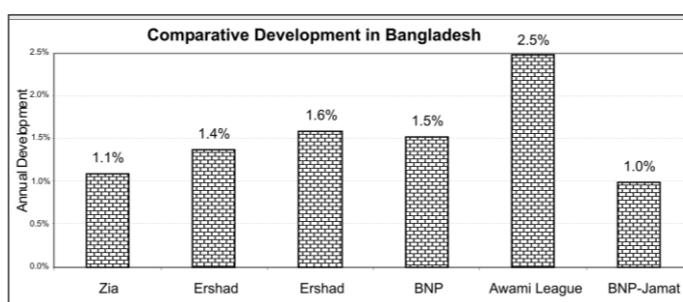
Unlike money, which one can amass in billions, one cannot live billions of years or amass billions of years of education. So an achievement in overall education level or health would mean that quite a large part of the society got the benefit.

Today's achievement in education and healthy life will contribute to tomorrow's economic growth. This is why human development index is a better indicator of an average person's life.

The first table and figure show human development trend in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and India (reported by UNDP <http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/>). Bangladesh, in 1975, was behind India and Pakistan but ahead of Nepal.

By the end of 1990, Bangladesh fell behind the three other players, and the difference was even bigger

exact opposites during two conse-



Period	Bangladesh	Nepal	Pakistan	India
1976-1980	1.1%	2.5%	1.3%	1.3%
1981-1985	1.4%	2.5%	1.6%	1.7%
1986-1990	1.6%	2.5%	2.0%	1.6%
1991-1995	1.5%	2.0%	1.3%	1.3%
1996-2000	2.5%	1.4%	0.7%	1.1%
2001-2004	1.0%	1.4%	1.4%	1.5%

Year	Bangladesh	Nepal	Pakistan	India
1975	0.35	0.30	0.37	0.41
1980	0.37	0.34	0.39	0.44
1985	0.39	0.38	0.42	0.48
1990	0.42	0.43	0.46	0.52
1995	0.45	0.47	0.49	0.55
2000	0.51	0.50	0.51	0.58
2004	0.53	0.53	0.54	0.61

cutive regimes.

Bangladesh never faced such a national disaster for such a long period in the last three decades. What could have happened to Bangladesh if BNP-Jamaat could match Awami League's development records? Look at the third figure. We could be way above Nepal and Pakistan, and could catch India by 2007.

Now, if we can regain Hasina's records today, we would likely catch India by 2012. If the current catastrophe continues for another 6 years (till 2010) we will never catch India in the foreseeable future, and fall behind



In 1998, when Southeast Asia faced a serious currency crisis and faltering economic growth, Bangladesh managed to contain the worst flood in its history and still achieve a 5% GDP growth.

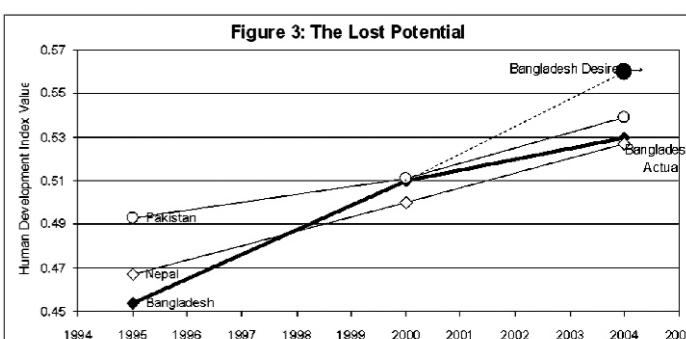
When India was having 4% GDP growth in 2000, we were running 50% faster than them at 6%. In 2003, two years after BNP-Jamaat took over, we had about 5% growth, but at the same India was running at 8% growth; 60% faster than us.

We are still running, but falling far behind our nearest neighbours. Our human development- economic growth, education, and health are falling. This underachievement in health and education coupled with energy sector disaster will impede

Daily Star.

development for years to come. This is the worst of times. This is the dark age of human development for Bangladesh.

Zakaria Khondker is a freelance contributor to The



## Should we withhold our votes?

By this time, every one of us will lose our mental peace, students will lose some valuable time from their academic life, and businessmen will lose their profit in the wake of mass movements. When such an ominous future looms large, I invite you to think twice before exercising your voting rights in a controversial election. If you ask me what I would do in such a situation, I say I would prefer withholding my vote.

AJM SHAFIUL ALAM BHUIYAN

The president-cum-chief adviser is adamant to hold the general election on January 22 in spite of the withdrawal of major political parties, except the BNP-Jamaat coalition, which elected him president, from the electoral process. He looks desperate to hand over power to his benefactors through a ludicrous election. He seems committed to pay back his benefactors at the cost of our democracy.

As citizens we need to ponder whether we will take part in Professor Iajuddin's adventure.

Voting for a preferred candidate in an irregularities-free and fair election is our constitutional right, but it could only be fruitfully exercised when the government and Election Commission create a favorable environment. The question now is: did the caretaker government create such an environment?

The CA has recently issued an elaborate statement assuring us that his government has done

everything necessary to make sure that we can vote in a festive mood. Every one of us who follow Bangladeshi politics and are concerned about the current political crisis heard the statement on public and private TV channels and read it in newspapers.

We need to assess how much confidence we can have on his assurance. And for this, the statement needs a close look.

The statement looks like a mediocre tale of determination, remorse, and assurance told to persuade people in favour of the election. This communiqué tells us that the CA is determined to hold the election on the stipulated day because the constitution obligates him to hold the election within 90 days from the day the CTG took over state responsibilities.

It says that he is remorseful because he sometimes had to unfairly treat the BNP-Jamaat coalition to accommodate the demands of the agitating political parties -- the AL-led alliance. He feels that it was against his treach-

erous spirit because as a teacher he always dealt with issues in an impartial manner.

Finally, the communiqué assures us that the CA has taken all the necessary steps to hold a free and fair election, but all of a sudden the AL-led alliance withdrew their participation from the election. These claims seem innocent, but they are far-reaching. Let's assess them.

Our politicians invoke the constitution when it is supportive to their position, but often forget their constitutional obligations. The CA has demonstrated that he is no exception to this. He already forgot that his very takeover as the CA was unconstitutional.

There is no credible evidence to suggest that he exhausted other constitutional provisions before taking over as the CA. His government also denied the progress of a law suit challenging the validity of his takeover as the CA. He did not do it himself. The chief justice who was appointed by the BNP-Jamaat coalition did it for him, creating a new precedence of

developing world, at -1%. Over 3 billion people are included, for Bangladesh, China, India, Brazil, and Mexico are part of this category.

The anti-globalization movement often claims that integration leads to growing inequality within countries, with no benefits going to the poor. Generally, this is not true. There are certainly some countries in which inequality has risen, like China and the US, but there is no worldwide trend.

Most important, in the developing countries that are growing well as a result of integration and other reforms, rapid growth translates into rapid poverty reduction. The total number of extreme poor (living on less than \$1 per day measured at purchasing power parity) increased throughout history up to about 1980. Since 1980 that number declined by 200 million, while world population increased by 1.8 billion.

This group has seen an acceleration of its per capita growth rate, reaching a population-weighted average of 5% annually in the 1990s.

Developing nations also had a

principle into practice as a teacher, but we know for sure that as the CA he utterly failed to uphold this virtue.

As far as the upcoming election is concerned the BNP-Jamaat coalition is the most beneficiary of the CTG. As the immediate past ruling party, they enjoy undue advantages which can swing the outcome of the election. Before leaving power to the CTG, the BNP-Jamaat coalition manned key positions of the bureaucracy and law enforcement agencies and the EC with their flunkies to manipulate the election.

None except the die-hard BNP-Jamaat supporters can claim that the CTG created a level playing field for the opposing political forces, nullifying the undue advantages.

Instead, evidences suggest, the CA obstructed the moves made by some of his advisers to create a level playing field. As like as the previous caretaker governments, the present CTG was supposed to neutralize the bureaucracy and law enforcement agencies by manning the key positions with efficient non-partisan people.

The CTG wanted to reconstitute the EC because it lacked credibility to hold a fair election. The CA was supposed to appoint two new non-partisan election

commissioners and a chief election commissioner (CEC). But he appointed two new election commissioners, with one having direct affiliation with the BNP-Jamaat coalition, and backtracked from appointing a non-partisan CEC.

Four advisers resigned from the government in protest against the CA's flip-flop. The CA filled their places with people who are soft toward the BNP-Jamaat coalition.

In my last commentary I predicted that if the CA continued to maneuver in a partisan way and the advisors failed to keep him on track the demand for his resignation would become the dominant discourse in our political climate.

Unfortunately things are moving toward that direction.

The AL-led alliance withdrew their participation saying that the CA lost his credibility to hold a fair election. The demand for his resignation has been gaining ground. But he has found his power to call on the army as the last resort. He uses his last resort to intimidate those who are demanding his resignation as the CA. He is determined to exercise his power to hold the election on January 22.

This suggests that he is ignorant of our political history. He forgot that the army could not keep General Ershad in power for more

than nine years. The BNP could not continue enjoying its rule after having a one-sided election in February 1996.

Abusing the state power, he will be able to bring the BNP-Jamaat coalition back to power but the new government will lack legitimacy. The election will not be acceptable to anyone. Rather it will further pollute our political system.

However, the upcoming BNP-Jamaat government will be able to venture into anything including a further amendment of the Constitution to strengthen its position with its absolute reign over state machineries. But ultimately they will have to go like the

way they did in the past because of mass movements.

By this time, every one of us will lose our mental peace, students will lose some valuable time from their academic life, and businessmen will lose their profit in the wake of mass movements.

When such an ominous future looms large, I invite you to think twice before exercising your voting rights in a controversial election. If you ask me what I would do in such a situation, I say I would prefer withholding my vote.

AJM Shafiqul Alam Bhuiyan teaches in the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka.

## The poor like globalization

Notwithstanding the positive views of globalization in the developing world, the survey shows that there are common anxieties around the world concerning the availability of good jobs, job insecurity, old age support, and other quality of life issues. Interestingly, people tend not to blame globalization for lack of progress in these areas, but rather poor governance in their own countries.

DAVID DOLLAR

A recent worldwide poll may have come as a shock to those who view the anti-globalization demonstrations as emblematic of a general souring mood about global economic integration. The Pew survey found that not only was the attitude generally positive but there was more enthusiasm for foreign trade and investment in developing countries than in rich ones.

A close look at the economies of those countries shows why: the fast-growing economies in the world in this era of globalization are developing countries that are aggressively integrating with the world economy. However, the survey also found common anxieties around the world that protest-

ers often highlight but a majority of the polled did not blame economic integration for it.

It is increasingly clear that while this integration brings benefits, it also requires complementary institutions and policies in order to enhance the gains and cushion some of the risks of greater openness.

Although these countries were particularly pro-globalization