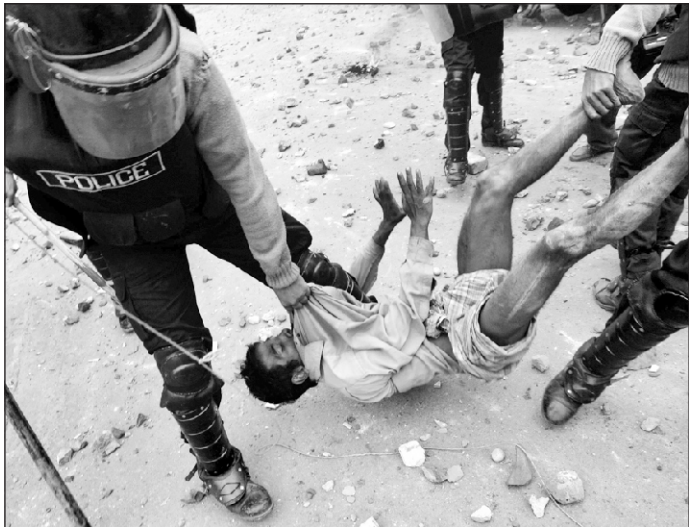


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



# Khaleda's press conference

I just read Abdul Latif Mondal's post-editorial article on Khaleda Zia's press conference. I appreciate his writing, but it sounded to me like BNP bashing. Did he have to take a political side to "Analyse" Khaleda Zia's press conference? I would like to analyse his analysis below:

A. Can the political party which boycotts a stage-managed election to protect people's right of franchise be held responsible for the loss of credibility of that election?

Yes, it can be held responsible. Why? Because they declared to go for vote on 22nd January. You are comparing this coming election to Ershad's era elections which were farcical. The same guy is in "Mohajot" now.

B. Has a congenial atmosphere for holding the election

been created?

Khaleda Zia as a political party leader, can ask any political party to join in the election. As you said, it is a stage-managed election, she does not have the responsibility to create the so called "atmosphere " for election, it's CG's job to do so.

C. But the question that haunts the people's mind is: would there have arisen any circumstances leading to barring Ershad from contesting election if he had stuck to his decision to stay with the BNP-led alliance?

--The most important thing is Ershad joined "Mohajot" not the 4-party alliance. The grand alliance boycotted the election because Ershad was convicted. That's the reality now. Nothing changed in those 10

days except Ershad being convicted and disqualified for election, which unsettled the AL. You are asking what would have happened if he joined the 4-party alliance. Why don't you ask what the AL would do if it

were in BNP's position?

Why don't you write anything about Sk. Hasina's press conference?

**DeshpremiK**  
On e-mail



# Where are we going?

The prevalent political situation is outrageous, to say the least. Although this sort of political turmoil has become too much of a banality for us, in the span of 15 years, but the complexities and intensiveness of the current situation surpass all the previous situations we had faced. The real problem lies with the unequivocal support and mistrust respectively of the two political giants about the election conducting bodies, it's amusing that both of them contradict each other at every word and action, although they have the same goal and ideology.

The gross misunderstanding between these political parties is partially because of the lack of commu-

nication between the two former premiers, if they would have spoken directly to each other, the problem could have been solved.

But practically it's not as easy as that, because the demands of the opposing alliances are diametrically opposite and the situation is aggravated by the presence of a caretaker government, and the indiscriminate activities of the political parties including the boycott of election by the expanded alliance and the inception of army and a stubborn stance of 4-party alliance towards the constitution.

Where are we going now?  
**Syed Muntasir Ridwan**  
Kalabagan, Dhaka

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The caretaker government is trying to use the army to help complete a farcical election. Fair election is the demand of the whole nation and not only of the opposition. Too many incidents clearly indicate that the Election Commission is under the control of the BNP.

Nobody should work for a farcical election because an honest government servant follows only the honest orders of the boss.  
**Dr. Mahboob Hossain**  
Associate Professor  
Department of Pharmacy  
The University of Asia Pacific  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Spare the examinees

We, the peace loving people of Bangladesh, are facing a deep crisis due to the present political impasse. We are wholeheartedly expecting to end this crisis peacefully, compassionately and democratically. The centre of attention of this letter is however on holding O' Level and A' Level exams. This is well known to all that these are public exams, held internationally where a huge number of students from a large number of countries appear at the same time. Shifting of the exam schedule is thus impossible. On the other hand shifting the timing will cause massive suffering for all the relevant people. Each and every student spent ten to twelve (for A Level) years in preparation. The teachers spent their valuable time and parents/guardians sacrificed a large amount for bearing huge expenses.

In the English medium system these exams are held twice in a year. Many students appeared in half of the exams and scored grade 'A'. They as well as others are expecting good results in the coming exams. By any means students, guardians, teachers, management of schools, and I believe all sensible people of the country, expect that students could appear in their exams in a peaceful congenial atmosphere. Nevertheless, the clashes, chases that took place during political programmes caused a lot of trouble to the students. We gratefully acknowledge that the government and political parties provided all facilities to conduct the exams of

May-June session of 2006 in response to the request from the British Council, the Exam Management Authority.

In the above circumstances, we the guardians humbly request our government, politicians and all others concerned to keep the examinees out of any political programme.

**Nurun Nahar Begum**  
On e-mail

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Thank you very much for the concern shown by you for our sons/daughters who are going to appear in their O' & A' level exams. We would be more grateful to you if you please raise this issue with the Honourable British High Commissioner in Bangladesh who can discuss the issue with the agencies concerned.

We want smooth holding of the exams.

**Amin R. Bhuiyan**  
On e-mail

## Civil administration reshuffle

Today (08/01/2007) I was reading the article "Civil admin reshuffle makes little sense".

It's a good article with lots of detail about the reshuffle done by the caretaker government. The question I have is how the reshuffle compared to the last three caretaker governments' reshuffle? That's the important thing. Were any civil administration officers in previous caretaker government tenures fired or made inactive? What's the goal here? Does the

caretaker government have the responsibility to depoliticise the full civil administration and fire anybody and everybody who got special favours in the previous administration? I have no objection to that. That way every five years we will get a new civil administration.

I would just request the writers to write a follow-up article to compare the reshuffle of this government with the reshuffle of previous three caretaker governments. Only then we will know if it is enough or too little. The last three elections were perceived to be free and fair.

**Saif, On email**

## The biggest problem

I completely agree with you. The biggest problem our country is facing right now is greed. All over Bangladesh people are only looking to make money. Where is morality? Such a shame to hear our people degrading our nation on purpose and selfishly. I wish people would just once close their eyes and think about how much shame they are bringing on Bangladesh. The millionaires are never satisfied. It is because of them that the whole country is suffering. People are dying every day because we cannot provide what they need. Even if one does have what we need they wouldn't give it to us. What we actually need to change all of this is a new government. A government that is actually of the people. It should be a government where people matter, not the president. The millionaires should start paying taxes so we could afford more of what is required. We need disci-

pline. We need someone to guide us all like a strict yet calm teacher training their apprentices. We need education and more than that we need knowledge. How can we ever get all these things if the ones that are trying to give it to us are being killed for it? The government should be ashamed of itself for not being able to deliver, for breaking all promises, making the country worse every day.

Everything has a start and the fall of Bangladesh had its foundation built by the corrupt people in the government.

**Areader, On email**

## Mass arrests

When the country is reeling under the spell of a cold wave, the valiant law enforcers, as their wont, have managed to terrorise the poorer section of the urban populace. They have ferreted the slums, harassed the pedestrians and arrested many innocent people. The fact that many of the arrestees include students, day-labourers and rickshaw-pullers highlights the sheer display of power on the part of the police. It seems that these people were taken into custody only because of their poverty or helplessness in the face of the state machinery.

Such an instance of indiscriminate arrest indicates the dismal state of democratic norms and human rights in our country. The whole episode evinces the point that the harness of law and justice falls heavily on the neck of the poor. As reported by the newspapers, the near ones of the arrestees had to

sell or pawn their valuables to raise money so that they could buy the freedom of their husbands or brothers, as if the cold wave was not enough to multiply their miseries. The last thing they needed was the manmade disaster which came out of the blue only to compound their sorrows.

**Zabed Wali**  
Pahartali, Chittagong

## Bankrupt politicians

The country has once again fallen into the grip of 3-day blockade imposed by bankrupt politicians, who pretend to be unaware of the immense suffering of the common people caused by such blockade. From the latest development of the country's political situation, we are afraid that just because of personal feud among the bankrupt political leaders and their desperate goal to grab power, Bangladesh may soon be a glaring example of how such a resourceful and economically potential country is led to the black hole of disaster by its power greedy patriotic (?) politicians.

To grab power, they don't hesitate to interpret the clauses of constitution in their own ways and even to change their stands in defining constitution clauses. As an example of such heinous activity(s) of the politicians we may look to the then Prime Minister and present AL Chief's speech given in the parliament on April 12, 2001, where she clearly stated, "Whatever be the situation, election is to be held within 90 days from the date of dissolving the parliament. However, for holding by-election,

this binding may be relaxed depending on the situation." But today she has taken a 180 degree turn in the issue. She is desperate to change the election schedule from Jan. 22, 2007 to a suitable date convenient to her alliance. With the support of partisan intellectuals and educationists, who claim themselves as conscience of the nation, lawyers and leaders of the AL led alliance are trying hard to make their stand trustworthy by interpreting the concerned clause(s) of the constitution wrongly. Another such example is alliance of Ershad led JP with AL led 14-party alliance.

Many such examples may also be cited in case of 4-party alliance also. It is shameful for us that such political leaders run the country.

Such opportunistic stance of our politicians is creating scopes for the vested corners, who are trying to take our beloved country into their grip.

Our politicians are so mad for capturing power that they have no time to take care of the grave problems of the country. Patriotic (?) politicians are indulged in nasty power struggle so heavily that they have no time to look to country's economy, which is on the verge of collapse, export markets are being taken by our competitors, our economic zones of the Bay of Bengal, which are being taken by the neighbouring countries, water from our main rivers are being diverted by our neighbour causing immense loss to our economy and ecology, hundreds of Bangladeshis are being killed every

America got to attack a sovereign country on a false pretext, destroy the country, kill thousands of innocent people, arrest it's president and sentence him to death?

In order to keep the country together,



Saddam Hussein may have sometimes had to act unkindly, but it certainly does not warrant another country to

invade it, which is more inhuman than what Saddam had done. The people of Iraq have stated on a number of occasions that the regime of Saddam Hussein was much better than this unbearable occupation.

An unofficial video of the execution has been released, which clearly seems like a conspiracy carried out deliberately to widen the rift between the Shias and Sunnis, so that they will fight each other and in the process finish themselves off. What a despicable thing to do!

Saddam Hussein was not cowed down by fear and till the last moment he held his head high.

**Nur Jahan**  
Chittagong

year in the border areas.

Time has come to get rid of such bankrupt political leaders, let us be united.

**A.K.M. Fakhru Alam**  
Siddeswari Lane, Dhaka

## A growing economy

10 October 2006, I felt proud to be a Bangladeshi once again. Yes, I am talking about the day Dr. Muhammad Yunus, the son of our soil, was declared a Noble Prize winner. It was like a milestone we crossed and it gave us a chance to rethink about the country and its future.

Have you felt the blowing winds of change? Bangladesh is changing and changing at a tremendous pace in spite of political unrest and lack of direction. The socio-demographic changes are happening as we have seen slowly, youngsters are taking over in professional world, tele-density is growing, roads and highways are changing, rural electrification is growing at faster pace, organised retail both in urban and semi urban, growing internet access, growing human resource etc. In a country of 150 million people 5 cell telcos are operating while one more is waiting in the wings. This has tremendous impact on our market dynamics.

The consumer or shoppers' buying pattern is changing along with the changing psyche. A few years back big shop and supermarkets were considered expensive, these days these shops signify value for money, choice, quality and convenience. Malaysian and packaged food from different countries

is well accepted by the consumer on hygiene factor. The concept of living for today is getting popular as urban lifestyle ASKS FOR MORE. Consumers are spending on vacation, entertainment, eating out, music, movies, apparels, furniture, and personal care. All these create a market worth BDT 25000-30,000 crore. All these made possible by the growing financial institutions and financial products e.g. plastic cards, loan facilities etc. What we need to have is a strong consumer forum. Women of Bangladesh are coming out and getting involved in every sphere of professional world including home making. Media is playing a very important role in changing lifestyle. Local players have become very active in media and we have seen its impact. Today, we are working in a media industry worth BDT 1,000 crore approximately.

Even when we look at the outdoor scenario we can feel the basic improvements in terms of production value and innovations. These are positive indicators of a growing media market. What we need is basically to have rules and regulation imposed on advertising campaign to drive quality bit of it. While the country is moving at such a pace we need a Great Dreamer as we know 'Dreams will find the means-slogan of Mercedes Benz'.

**Saif Uddin**  
CEO, Paper rhyme  
Banani, Dhaka

# Israel and Iran



Reports indicating possible Israeli attack on the nuclear installations in Iran by using "mini nukes" look mischievous and threatening to Iran. Such provocative reports at the behest of the Bush administration are meant only to provoke Tehran to go for first hit tactics, instead of waiting for the Israeli action first. The US and Israel should be well aware of the preparations being made by the government of President Mahmoud Admedinejad to face any eventuality arising out of unexpected attacks either from the USA or from Israel. Any misadventure on Iran, therefore, could only be eventually disastrous for the attackers, initial possible destruction and genocide in Iran notwithstanding. But that would put an end to the current US strategy of catastrophic pre-emptive wars in the Middle East and lead to real disarmament, including nuclear.

Iran today is much better equipped than, say, ten years ago when it was shattered by a long war with Iraq aided by the US weapons.

**Dr. Abdul Ruff Colachal**  
JNU, New Delhi

# DESERTIFICATION



The World Environment Day theme for 2006 was "Deserts and Desertification" and the slogan was "Don't Desert Dry lands!" The slogan emphasized the importance of protecting dry lands. This dry land ecosystem is the home to one-third of the world's people mostly living in the developing countries who are more vulnerable members of the society.

Of the environmental issues facing Bangladesh, desertification is the greatest challenge for it. South to nor-western part of Bangladesh is in the grip of land degradation leading to desertification. For sustainable development it must pay attention to halt land degradation and management of dry lands as well.

Creating awareness about desertification and its lethal consequences is very important.

**Md. Sohrab Ali, Ph D**  
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Department of Environment  
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