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## A new Bangladesh

In 1971, a new country was created and in the past 36 years its people have struggled to build a prosperous society.

With so much uncertainty, its people, from all walks of life, dispersed around the world. In early 2007, a change took place and now it is time for everyone to come home. It is now time for Bangladesh to take its place on the world stage.

The government is headed by Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed. His associates and heads of various government organisations have committed themselves to bringing about positive changes. These individuals are working to improve the



environment, the educational system and other social programmes.

After 16 months of their continuous hard work, the government has effected visible changes in the way Bangladesh is run. These changes, promoted aggressively, have produced the desired results.

In all emerging countries, corruption has always proved to be a stumbling block to prosperity. This situation is changing in Bangladesh. There is a renewed hope among the ordinary citizens. There is a sense of a re-energized Bangladesh, poised to become a new 'Asian Tiger'.

It is my considered opinion that there are lots of people wanting to and waiting to invest money in Bangladesh but they are holding themselves back until a better business environment is created. That time has arrived.

To their credit, the present government has attempted to address the issue of maximizing food production in response to the food shortages that are occurring in Bangladesh, and around the world. We must encourage the government.

Bangladesh can succeed if it follows the path of strong and efficient operating management and fiscal efficiency while continuing to support the policies that have been implemented. With these measures in place, Bangladesh can take its place on the world stage as the newest 'Asian Tiger'.

MA Quader, Dhaka

### August 21 grenade attack

In the latest development, the CID has submitted report to Dhaka Metropolitan Court implicating 22 persons in the gruesome attack. We have known through different media about how fake stories were made public regarding the nefarious attack under the previous political government.

At that time politicians of the party in power also made open comments that it was a sabotage conducted by the AL. Do they think that people in general are nothing but fools? Now the latest report has identified the organisation and individuals responsible for the attack, one MP of the then ruling party is allegedly involved with the gruesome attack (Prothom Alo, 12th June, 2008).

People want justice to be meted out to all.

Md. Faruk Hossain  
Cox's Bazar

### Transport issue

Mahbubun Nabi's article on the subject published in your pages on 14 June is an interesting and pragmatic way to solve Dhaka's transport gridlock. More so it is not so capital intensive, can be done phase wise spread over a few years, without a large one time solution. It

is indeed a very reasonable approach, which should be a lesson for our city planners and the people at the top. They should read, understand and implement the ideas put forward in the article.

For Dhaka, the solution need not be MRTs, elevated highways or flyovers.

The approach has little to do with communication, or road building and such high value infrastructure investment. The gamut of the solution lies in political and administrative decisions and its implications, without the usual endless debates which is our normal standard practice; resulting in nothing else but waste of time! We must seriously consider and adopt the proposed solution, and work at it with determination and commitment. It will I believe change the face of Dhaka forever, and make it a nicer place to live in!

If I rightly remember, Ershad had some ideas in these lines, of administrative decentralisation through the upazila concept. Sadly, our politicians who rule, or usually misrule the country to the best of their ability, could never accept the idea of decentralisation of power and authority! For them, all along, the more the power and authority they can grab, the more the possibility for under-the-table, tax free income! Can they ever give this up? The simple answer is NO!

Small wonder then, that the idea never took off. I firmly believe that we must decentralise our government, and spread out the ministries away from Dhaka to the existing divisional cities (later provincial capitals) as suggested in the article. We have to make decentralisation a reality; and steps should start from now! Can't the CTG set the ball rolling? If they can modify the constitution, why cannot they alter and improve the administration set up through decentralisation of administrative power and authority? Or do they, like the infamous politicians, also prefer to have all the power concentrated with them sitting and ruling from Dhaka? Do they fill helpless outside Dhaka, despite all the advances in instant communication?

S.A. Mansoor  
Dhaka

### US presidential election

The people of the United States should elect a man as their president who will have the energy and sagacity to deal with the challenges of our times.

That's a very important job on their hands!  
Saikat Datta  
Farmgate, Tejgaon  
Dhaka

### Future of democracy

I am writing this letter in response to what eminent jurist Dr. Kamal Hossain and convener of the newly formed Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) Dr. Quershi had to say regarding the temporary release of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Although I have tremendous level of respect for both of these house-hold names in Bangladesh politics, but it disheartens me to see that none of these leaders see the reality of the situation. Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama in his book quite rightly put it, when he said that it is very difficult to integrate idealism with realism. It seems to me that his saying can hold true for the statements and comments made by these two eminent politicians. It is sad to see that they have not been able to see the reality of the situation and rather has stuck by their idealistic nature. Now let us face the reality, the release of Sheikh Hasina and also that of Begum Khaleda Zia is needed to ensure that their respective political parties take part in the upcoming elections and also to lend credibility to the election process. Simultaneously, we would also like to see the return to democracy in Bangladesh. Keeping that in mind, I therefore urge our politicians to consider the reality of the situation. The people of this country want a return to democracy which is only possible through a credible, free and fair election.

Elections will only be credible with the participation of the major stakeholders such as the Awami League and the BNP. It is truly sad and unfortunate that we are being held hostage to the demand of the two political parties which even today enjoy tremendous popular support and can have a strong claim to representing the majority of the population. Is that not what democracy is all about? Sheikh Tanjeb Islam  
Monash University

### "Ray of hope"

To pave the way for smooth implementation of the election roadmap, the govt is opening up all roads for politicians to participate in the election.

To ensure a credible election, the govt is trying to bring everyone, especially the big political parties in the dialogue table which is the foremost task of the CTG. We welcome the govt's efforts for restoring people's confidence, especially the politicians' for holding election.

In the process, the govt is also releasing top leaders of big parties which was the number one demand of the political parties.

We are not concerned about the release of leaders like Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia. The ray of hope is not meant for these big politicians. The ray of hope is the ray of light being seen by those who committed all sorts of economic crimes, and those who were making money holding official positions meaning bureaucrats, lower grade politicians and many more who were beneficiaries of the last 4-party alliance government.

It has transpired that some relatives of these top leaders are being released for treatment abroad. Their misdeeds were known-- they were involved in killings, extortion and many other heinous crimes. If they are released without trial, what about the other criminals who committed similar crimes?

The question is why should they be sent abroad for treatment? The government cannot afford to do anything that will tarnish its image! Shafiqul Islam  
One-mail

## Violence against women

The constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh ensures equal rights for all citizens, irrespective of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Thus women enjoy the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and expression, association and assembly which form the basis of political activity in a civil society. But in practice women are neglected and oppressed.

Now the question is what is domestic violence? Any unwanted and oppressive behaviour perpetrated upon an individual by an intimate relation within the boundary of home and outside the home is considered domestic violence. The forms of repression which are treated as violence are physical, economic, sexual, physiological or emotional abuse. Violence against women has become a common phenomenon all over the world as well as Bangladesh. The home is considered as the safest place for women but they are not as safe as we think.

Our country will be developed only when we will be able to ensure a safe environment for women.

Md. Serajul Islam Hridoy  
Department of Political Science  
University of Dhaka



### Child labour

An estimated 158 million children aged 5-14 are engaged in child labour - one in every six children in the world. Millions of children are engaged in hazardous jobs or conditions, such as working in mines, working with chemicals and pesticides or working with dangerous machinery. They are everywhere but invisible, toiling as domestic servants in homes, labouring behind the walls of workshops, hidden from view in plantations. Children living in the poorest households in rural areas are most likely to be engaged in child labour.

Those burdened with household chores are mostly girls. Millions of girls who work as domestic servants are especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Labour often interferes with children's education. Ensuring that all children go to school and that their education is of good quality are the key to preventing child labour.

Aditi  
Student  
Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh

### Bangladesh-Myanmar road

It is heartening news that the much-talked about construction of the direct link road from Bangladesh up to the national road of Myanmar is going to start next year.

As Myanmar is our neighbour, we should develop friendly relations with it. By the proposed link road we will be able to go to China and Thailand via Myanmar, so the prospect of expanding our business relations with these countries is very bright.

We will be eagerly waiting for the happy inauguration of the road.  
Harun-or-Rashid  
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

### Construction of road

Reference to the report published in The Daily Star on 25 May 2008.

I am surprised to know that a new road will be constructed under the supervision of the LGRD and some other organisations at a cost of around Tk 25 crore near the old airport area. The road, the authorities believe, will enable the traffic to pass by easily from Mirpur and Mohammadpur areas to Gulshan and Banani. But how is it possible? In my opinion the proposed intersection at the end of the old and new roads will create the same traffic jam. On the other hand, if the existing road named Bijoy Sharani is widened and the fountain on the road island is removed, we can hope that the movement of traffic will be eased.

Finally, I believe the authorities will reconsider their plan in light of the problems that might arise.

Hamid M  
Gandaria, Dhaka

### Crusade against corruption

Corruption had been a buzzword. It is now widely believed that due to the anti-corruption drive led by the interim govt, corruption has decreased. The government's crusade against corruption has succeeded to a great extent as they nabbed notorious criminals. Among the corrupt, many politicians are now languishing in jail.

The government has stated that the crusade against corruption and holding a free, fair and credible election are its main objectives.

Our expectation is that the government would continue its anti-corruption drive and show zero tolerance to all corrupt practices.

Md Zonaid Emran  
Dept. of Political Science  
University of Dhaka

### Good move, but...

First of all, I would like to thank the higher authorities for taking a wonderful step, that is, the counter-service for all transports. Most probably, it has been introduced for the first time in Chittagong. It has been introduced for ensuring better passenger service. It was our expectation that we people would enjoy a more comfortable transport service. We want to reach our destinations in due time. At the same time, it will partially stop traffic blockage here & there. But it is an irony that in our country it is very tough to implement the rules & policies.

The reality is that the vehicles are demanding extra fare. They also take passengers from almost any place. That's why they stop here and there. So I would request the authorities to look into the matter.  
Md. Joyal Abedin  
BBA in Marketing  
University of Chittagong

### Obama: is he different?

In the primaries 'Change' is, the jingle that Obama has stamped in the American mind. His winning the Democratic presidential nomination against the impressive Hillary Rodham Clinton, the former first lady, confirms an aspiration to see life differently among many of his countrymen. When the Republicans are beset by countless messy affairs both internal and international, of the Bush administration, what could be better for a Democratic presidential hopeful than gaining precious electoral currency by pressing for a change? Mr. Obama is wise enough not to miss it and so finds himself in the position to become the 44th American president.

Nevertheless, his projecting himself as a man of change has proved to be insincere too soon at least in one aspect now. Despite his previous records of being strongly sympathetic to the Palestinians, he has publicly revealed an unwavering commitment to Israel, which

has gainsaid his motto for change. One such deviation is too early, but it may not be too early to predict that he would inherit nothing but a set of Bush ideologies.

Please, don't misunderstand me. Unlike many Arab hardliners, especially in Hamas and Hezbollah, I never wish Israel to be obliterated. On the contrary, like Mr. Obama, I believe that 'Israel's security is sacrosanct. It is non-negotiable.' But I also believe that this security should not be made to prevail by depriving the rights of another people and slaughtering the identity of another country. Yet, when Mr. Obama avows that 'Jerusalem will remain the capital of Israel, and it must remain undivided,' he has rather endorsed the plea of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or AIPAC, the body he was talking to in Washington recently, that any idea to share Jerusalem is inadmissible.

And this is enough to make him seem poised to kowtow to the pro-Israel lobby in a way that may rule out any lingering chance of an Israeli-Palestinian settlement. Jerusalem or a part of it is the right to the Palestinians, and this admission is the very premise to any sound resolution between these two countries in conflict. Yet, by announcing otherwise, Barack Obama has done the best for the conflict to escalate, rather than resolve.

The Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has immediately rebutted him, declaring that 'This statement is totally rejected.'

This is how Mr. Obama has opened his basket of foreign policies. Is it a change, then? By his marvellous oratories, he may convince even a wary audience in the affirmative. But if we compare his inexcusable compassion for Israel with how Mr. Bush has treated this country, certainly, the result will be no difference.

M. Abdul Kabir  
Dept of CSC  
North South University

## Cricket over-publicised



The way Bangladesh cricket is advancing is alarming. As we have seen, Bangladesh cricket is not attracting spectators these days (The tri-nation tournament is an example). The main reason is poor performance. As a cricket fan of the Tigers, I believe and agree with the rest of my fellow cricket fans that our performance is nose-diving. But there are many reasons behind it too. I would blame Poor Team Selection & Excessive Publicity among many reasons for the nose dive.

Since the day Bangladesh received the ODI and Test Status, we have had too many players playing for the Team Bangladesh. If this continues, I think very soon the national cricket players will outnumber the Entire Population of New Zealand. There is no need to try immature players who have performed well in the under 19's and 17's. (No matter how good they are or talented they are). They should be groomed at the domestic level and given the chance at the age of 22/23 or may be even later as mentally they will be mature enough to cope with the pressure of international matches. I believe Sachin Tendulkars are born once in a century.

Ashraful is a victim of the selection committee and the media. If he was picked up at the age of 22, in two years' time his average

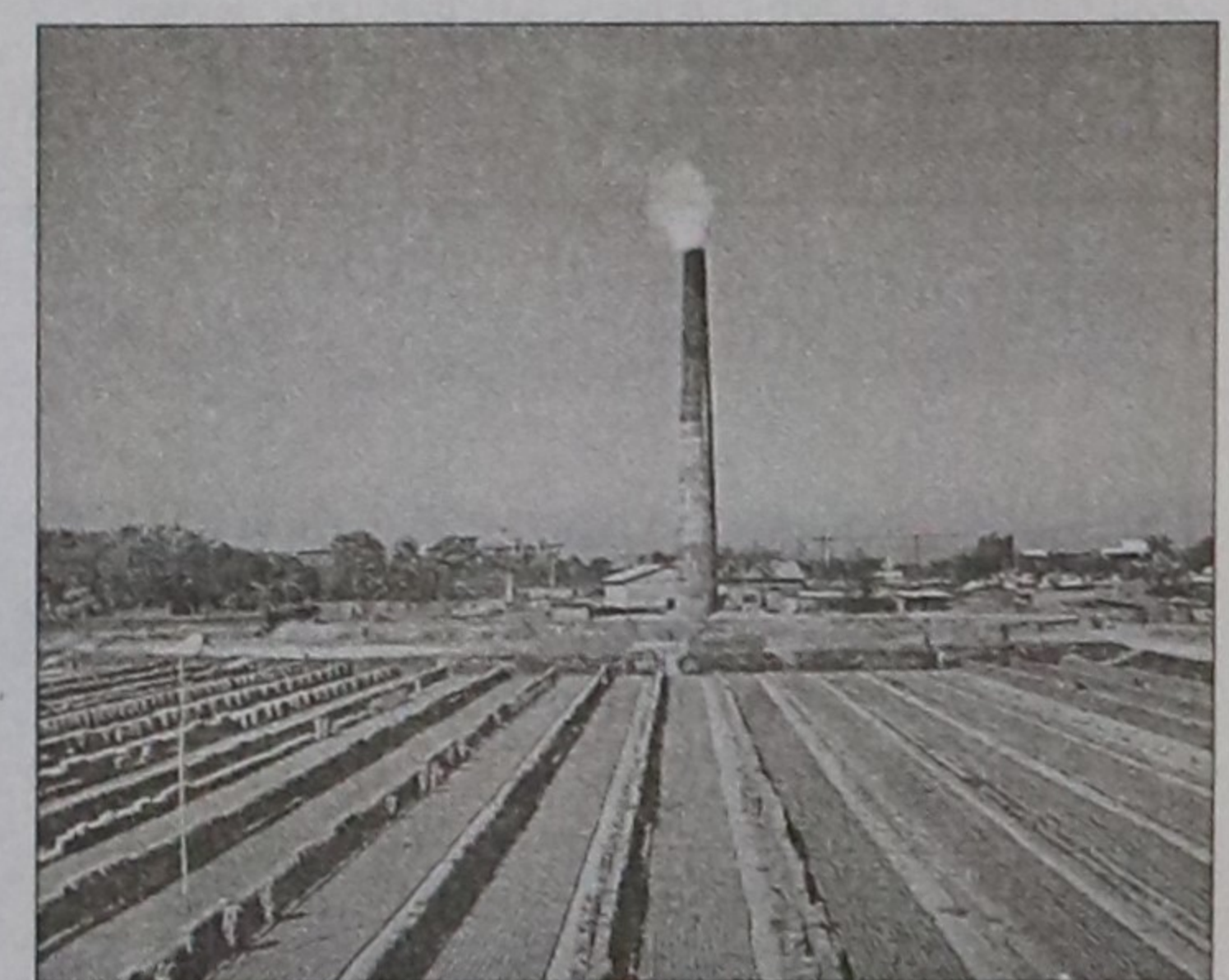
would have been in the 40's, instead of the present 20's. He could have been The Ricky Ponting or The Brian Lara of Bangladesh. Instead he has been given the burden of the captaincy of an immature side which will lose 90% of the matches they play.

The media is also to be blamed for the poor turn-out of the spectators and the unnecessary pressure on the players. The way they (media) report a victory or the way a fixture is described is in no way acceptable to those who understand the game. We are not India, Pakistan or Sri Lanka, that we can beat any top team. India & Pakistan have been playing cricket for more than three decades and we cannot have the same comparison/publicity/news before an international match. Our Bangladeshi spectators are mostly below the age of 25 and the majority of them come to the ground with hopes from the pre-match news only to find that the team has lost again. Cricket is the most difficult game played in the subcontinent, though it is popular. We should realise the situation before we say anything.

Let's give our boys another 10 years and then we can really talk about cricket on a daily basis.

Sohel Ahmed, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## Air pollution



It is a matter of great concern that the quality of the air of the big cities of our country is deteriorating at an alarming pace. Fumes from the industries, vehicular emissions, smoke from the brickfields--all contribute to the degradation of the quality of air. According to a study the amount of lead in Dhaka's air is 463 nanograms per cubic meter--the highest in the world. The very smell of the city's air is sickening--to say the least.

It is the rapid growth of population that is also responsible for the deterioration of air quality. The amount of carbon-dioxide, carbon-monoxide and sulphur-dioxide in the air is increasing rapidly. It is needless to say that this trend is worrisome.

A few years ago the government banned the vehicles run by two-stroke engines. Certainly, it was a wise move. More efforts are required to address the menace of air pollution.

Zabed Wali  
Pahartali, Chittagong