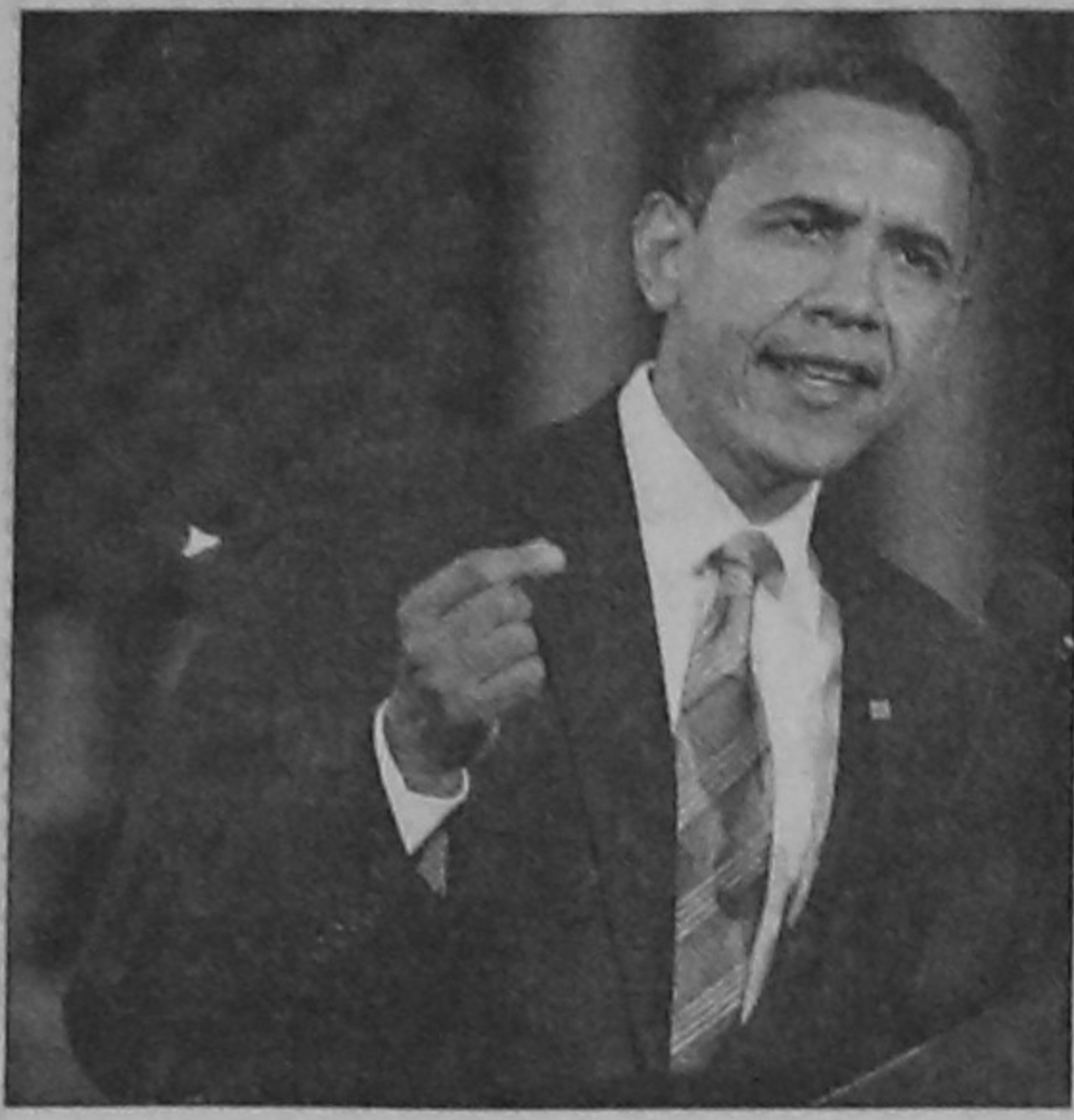


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Obama's grand victory



The American people have finally taken the right decision by electing Barack Obama as their 44th president. This entire election has been historic not least because an African-American will now be in the White House (for the first time in US history) but also because of the enthusiasm this man has managed to stir across America and around the globe. The results say it all--349 Electoral College votes for Obama to McCain's 162. He has indeed managed to bridge the divide between "red states" and "blue states" which was also an important theme of his 2004 speech--which brought him into the spotlight.

This overwhelming win goes to show that with their economy facing the worst financial crisis and with their country engaged in two seemingly endless wars, the people were sim-

ply willing to turn the page of George W. Bush's eight years of failed policies. The Economist said this about Obama--"He ran a calm and disciplined campaign, and most importantly managed to assure voters that he would be a safer leader in a time of financial and economic anxieties." This has been the key to his victory. Now with Obama taking office, one may not expect him to fulfil all the expectations but this much is sure that America will now move in a new direction and this victory has certainly been a victory of "hope over fear"; this win will hopefully usher in "change" in America. This inspiring politician now needs to alter America's tarnished image across the globe.

Wasif Wahed
Old DOHS, Dhaka

The new direction

The good ship "Obama" has reached the port safely; now the work of rebuilding the image of the USA has to begin. It is a hard task to win shattered confidence, change directions and rebuild the US finances now in tatters.

Bush has managed to leave the stage with America's political and moral status as a world power at the lowest ebb. Based on his egoistic belief that might is right, he has managed to seriously dent America's pivotal moral position at home and abroad.

From slavery and then civil war, once again the tenets of democracy, based on civil rights, have been re-established by the American people. This has reaffirmed our belief of democracy in the USA. It has added much needed esteem for America; a country, where people irrespective of cast, creed or colour can prove that right is might even at the highest level.

God bless Obama. We wish him good luck and speed in his huge task ahead. May he and his team succeed in making the dreams of ordinary Americans come true; and make the world a more peaceful place to live in. Let it bring the change that was the key issue of his election campaign.
S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

CTG's performance

The rule/role of the caretaker government is sadly and gradually coming to a close. Over the last 22 months, their efforts to bring a semblance of sanity to our governance, administration, commerce and industry etc may not have met with the success that they had hoped for or what the general masses had expected, but we (the general people) have much to thank them for. It would be rank ungratefulness to reject their good

intentions and efforts out of hand. At least we have enjoyed 22 months of comparative peace and tranquillity of normal life without the daily surprises of the past.

Most of us are watching the proceedings unfolding rapidly with anxiety and dreading the day when the rubber stamps will once again rule the roost. My earnest request to the CTG and the Election Commission is that under no circumstances, the "NO" vote slot be removed from the ballots. Rather there should be a provision that if the "NO" vote exceeds 25% of the votes cast (not total votes) or if the highest vote-getter obtains less than 40% of total votes (not cast), then that election should be declared null and void.

We would then, as free voters of a sovereign country, have the power to emphatically say "NO" if any candidate has even a hint of dirt on them. If in spite of that, the wrong people get elected, then we will have none but ourselves to blame as we once again sink into the mire of crime, corruption, nepotism and mal-administration.

Sikander Ahmed
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

Murky politics

The Jamaat factor has enraged the BNP leadership. The chairperson has to come out openly to ask for resignation of the full set of the EC bosses. She has also cast doubt about the neutrality of the CTG. It is very evident now how much inter-dependent the BNP and the Jamaat are politically. The BNP is fully dependent on the grassroots strength of the Jamaat, and the Jamaat is fully dependent on the BNP for their political survival.

The sudden and open reaction of the chairperson against the EC and the CTG was nothing but putting pressure on the EC and the CTG, so that the Jamaat could be registered without any delay. The

other strategy is to help postpone the election by at least 2-3 months, so that the full force of the BNP can be re-established to win the forthcoming election(?). The PDP chairperson is also echoing the same sentiment of postponement of election for 3 months. He also represents certain powerful voices including the so called "civil society". The AL is asking for election on 18th of Dec. 2008, since they are more organised to go for the polls now when the BNP and the Jamaat are still facing some trouble to settle down and go ahead.

Mr Ban Ki-moon was in Dhaka at the invitation of our CA. He was already talking about a political dialogue between the two major political parties. The role of the UNDP representative in Bangladesh is not clear. We do not know what she actually believes in--democracy or guided democracy? On the other hand, it is interesting to watch the prime role of the judiciary in shaping the political future of Bangladesh. This situation is forcing us to think seriously how important it is to have the highest court free from political pressure.
A reader
On e-mail

"Discarding Bangla"

Sadia Siddique's letter 'Discarding Bangla' (November 3) reminds us of a growing contradiction between English and one's mother language, not only in Bangladesh but in other countries as well in this subcontinent. Has English suddenly got entry into these countries formerly under the British rule? Surely not. English was there but there was no shame if one mastered his mother language side by side with English.

Take the case of Bengali speaking people in those days gone by. Even those who could not go beyond school education due to

personal constraints could write correct English and Bengali. They read not only Bengali books but they liked to read English books too. But were they comfortable in speaking English? Not perhaps though in case of need they did not backtrack. With sufficient knowledge of English reading and writing and moderate ability to speak the language, they could work efficiently in offices.

But things have changed. Now if you go for a job interview, more important point would be to test how confident you are in speaking English, and more importantly, how close to American pronunciation yours is. How strong you are in writing good English may be important, but surely not that important.

In some advertisements from institutions imparting English speaking skill, stress is noticed sometimes that they do discourage use of one's mother language there, so that the students can pick up correct English pronunciation. Do all jobs need now skill to speak English in the American way? If that be true, the sooner we forget our respective mother languages, the better. If not, let us learn both the languages with equal command and let us not feel nervous if we speak English in our own way. After all the English speaking people do not speak the language with so uniform accents that we cannot differentiate between them. In our own domain if we speak English in our own accents there is nothing wrong, if the employers and the employees are mostly from our respective countries.

Our forefathers did show us that they mastered basic language skills since they mastered two languages equally. With two eyes we can get better view of an object. With command over two languages we can equip us with better communication skill. Why should we set aside our respective and respected mother languages?
AK Dasgupta, Kolkata

The situation described by Sadia Siddique in her letter "Discarding Bangla" was not really earth shaking but a narrow perspective of a rather important debate. Our children need to learn English not only from a global perspective but also for their own survival. I heartily object to English taking precedence in our billboards and signboards. And what that girl did in the shop was vanity personified. Blame their parents for the mishap but please don't stop our children from learning any foreign language to enhance their skills. And to me English is and can only be a foreign language. And it has got nothing to do with my mother tongue.
Sazzad Hossain
Gulshan, Dhaka

Uttara roads

Those who possess the skyscrapers at Dhanmondi, Banani, Gulshan and other posh areas of Dhaka city come to Uttara with great enthusiasm and seek relief!

But it is a matter of concern that most of the roads of different sectors of Uttara are in very bad shape now.

Will anybody look into the matter?
Tonmoy Anwar
Chairman, Inspiration Coaching Centre (ICC)
Uttara, Dhaka

Law, morality and politics

Recently, I watched Barrister Rafiqul Islam talking in a TV talk show (29 October). During the talk he time and again mentioned that those politicians, most of whom belong to his own party BNP, who were convicted by lower courts recently under EPR for corruption and have appealed to the higher court against the judgments of the lower courts, should be allowed to contest in the upcoming national election, if necessary by carrying out an amendment to the EPR. His point of argument was that our constitution and normal law of the land does not hold a person guilty of a crime till s/he is found guilty by the highest court of the country, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

Many others are also expressing the same view to the media. Legally they are right. There is no doubt about that. May I ask the barrister and others holding the same view if they are morally right in saying so? Suppose a domestic male servant behaves very indecently with the daughter of the master of a house. The servant is found guilty by the lower court and is given due punishment.

The servant appeals to the higher/highest court against the conviction where the trial is not over even in, say, 10 years. The servant comes back on bail and asks his master to reinstate him, saying that he is innocent as the higher/highest court has not yet found him guilty of the charge. In such cases notwithstanding what is given in the holy books of law, the masters of the houses will be guided by common sense and morality and reject the requests. Is the law totally devoid of morality? If Bangladesh is a house, its people are its masters. The makers of its constitution and laws could never think that there would be so much of degeneration among the senior political leaders that they would disgrace our parliament by making professional goons members of our parliament. Should the master of Bangladesh, its people, give an opportunity to all such convicted persons to become members of parliament again? We need to change those laws which are not compatible with morality, and that cannot be done by members of parliament who are beneficiaries of such immoral laws. We have an opportunity now under the EPR to get rid of those persons with questionable morality and elect at least a set of honest people as the representatives of the people of our country.

To save this country from its present maladies, first of all we need to amend our constitution and change all laws which are not compatible with morality and the ethos of our people. I appeal to all concerned, including the lawyers who are defending the cases of the corrupt, to give the people of our country an opportunity to clean the political garbage. If not for anything, at least for the future welfare of your grandchildren give us an opportunity!

Syed Ashrafuzzaman
Mahakhali DOHS, Dhaka

Palash Kumar Podder
Former DU student
Faridpur

Syed Ashrafuzzaman
Mahakhali DOHS, Dhaka

BCS victims?

The first-time successful, but then unsuccessful, candidates of the 27th BCS have gone on hunger strike.

The government should look into the matter and find an acceptable solution.
Rezaul Haque Sumon
Dhaka

Blurred vision

When our nation underwent the crackdown on 25 March, 1971 many people sought refuge in India and also many were surprised to find heaps of soil around Esplanade and consequently the emergence of gridlocks affecting the passengers and pedestrians alike in the metropolis Calcutta, West Bengal.

The government of West Bengal led by the chief minister Mr. Siddhartha Shanker Roy in the '70s executed a contract with M/s Technostroiexport, Moscow, USSR for setting-up the underground metro rail system in Calcutta. Earlier, the President of Pakistan Mohammad Ayub Khan was amazed while visiting the pavilion of M/s Technostroiexport at a trade fair in Moscow. Thanks to the CPI (M) government led by Mr. Jyoti Basu for not abandoning the master plan of metro formulated by the preceding Congress government.

Nearly a decade after the independence, considering the gravity of the traffic movement in Dhaka city, my brother and myself flew to Moscow by an Aeroflot TU 134 aircraft in 1980 and landed on the following day. After a lengthy session we secured the agency of M/s Technostroiexport in Bangladesh.

With much valuable time, energy and money to expend we could finally submit the project proposal of the metro system for the capital city Dhaka to the appropriate authorities of the government of Bangladesh (GOB) 28 years back with continuous follow-up phone calls, visits and meetings.

Our nation had been blessed with not only patriotic, honest and hardworking citizens but also with several policy and decision makers living with a blurred vision.

Golam Ashraf
Gulshan, Dhaka

Why this violation of rules?

A recruitment advertisement was published on 10 July 2008 in a daily stating that a department working under the CA's office would recruit some people as Sub Assistant Director. It was open to all candidates from all over Bangladesh who were master's degree holders. I also applied for it. The recruitment test was held on 24 October 2008. But it is a matter of regret that like me the majority of the candidates did not get the admit card to appear in the examination. It's not clear to me why we didn't get the admit card.

We are jobless, we are without money and shelter. To apply for a job we have to spend some money. In spite of applying for the job as per requirements furnished in the circular, why should we be deprived of the chance to appear in the selection test?

I would request the government to make sure that justice is done to all job seekers in a situation like this.
Palash Kumar Podder
Former DU student
Faridpur

Developers in trouble

About two decades ago most of the people were against living in apartments. They were in favour of buying a plot of land and then constructing a house when they could manage money for it. But the culture of buying and living in apartments reached the peak during the period 1995-2006. For meeting the demand, many developers came to the scene and started making buildings.

This business is not very easy. It is hardly possible to satisfy every

Election

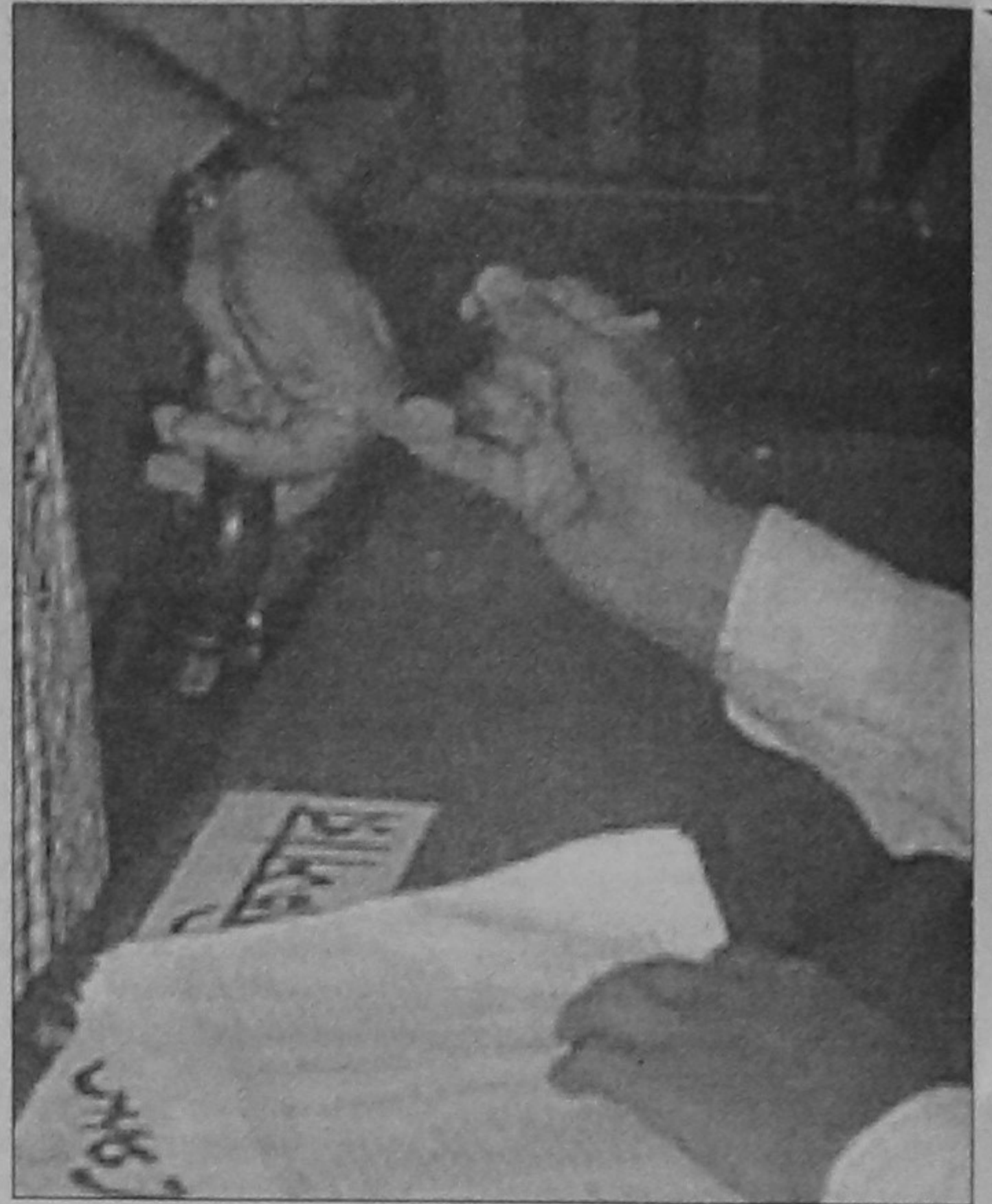
The EC has declared schedules for the upcoming national and upazila elections and now political parties would move forward with their election manifestos to the voters.

For the parliamentary election, I would urge the major political parties to consider decentralization of the administrative structure.

The central role will be to extend support to all those local government institutions to run their activities within the legal framework of the country.

This will help reduce corruption, enhance accountability and transparency etc.

Nasar
On e-mail



buyer, as every buyer has different demands, choice, opinion & liking. Developers have to handle architects, engineers, government, non-government autonomous offices and even mastans.

Now I would like to mention an important aspect of this business. Like many other projects, developers have to make an 'estimate' for every project. They need two to three years' time for completing the project. Before starting the work, they calculate the cost of the project on the basis of present prices of materials and services. They add 5% to 10% excess costs to deal with fluctuation of prices. But from January 2007 the prices of materials relating to this business have been going up and up and God knows where the limits are.

The developers are facing a big problem. They cannot remain even at break-even point (BEP). Now the developers' estimates are going wrong.

Housing is a very basic requirement of people. The developers need a proper, disciplined and stable environment to render the service expected of them.
Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

What are the parties offering?

This refers to the editorial of Nov 03 with the above title. Indeed, it is time for our political parties to tell us what they will offer the voters and how they intend to pay for all the juicy things that will be in their election manifestos.

All the politicians are busy highlighting everything that is wrong with the caretaker administration but they are very shy when it comes to offering anything original of their own.

Our politicians have been using the "suspension of democracy" as an excuse to avoid internal reforms, to avoid answering any questions about their misrule, and they even try to get all the criminal cases against them permanently withdrawn! The truth is, our politicians and their political parties haven't changed a bit. Their plan is to dilly-dally until the election is over and then they will go back to their usual routine of robbing this country. It is time for our media to start grilling our politicians and start raising these very important questions.

I thank The Daily Star for that timely editorial and hope to read more such editorials.
Azad Miah
Oldham, UK

Kerosene price

From newspaper reports it was learnt that the government was considering reduction of the prices of fuels which include Kerosene due to the fall of price in the international market.

The prices have been reduced but some points need to be clarified. We know that kerosene is widely used as fuel in our country. Most of our people use kerosene as cooking oil still now, in spite of its high price which is many times higher than what poor people can afford.

The high price of kerosene is affecting the majority of the people. It cannot be compared with other fuels usually used by the richer sections of society.

So, the government should look into the matter keeping in view the sufferings of common people.
Md. Mozammel Hossain
Agrabad, Chittagong

Power plants



We cannot imagine our daily life without electricity. But load-shedding is part of our daily life.

Recently, the caretaker government established many power plants, especially in Sylhet. But these power plants were not set up in a planned way.

My question to the government, why did you give permission to establish a power plant in a residential area and near a university?

Parvez Chawdhury Shiblu
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology

Recreate 1971 Mujibnagar

The Bangladesh Liberation War was not just a soldier's war but a people's war. Except a few collaborators, all the Bengalis under the leadership of the exiled Bangladesh government (Mujibnagar government) fought their own way against the occupation army.

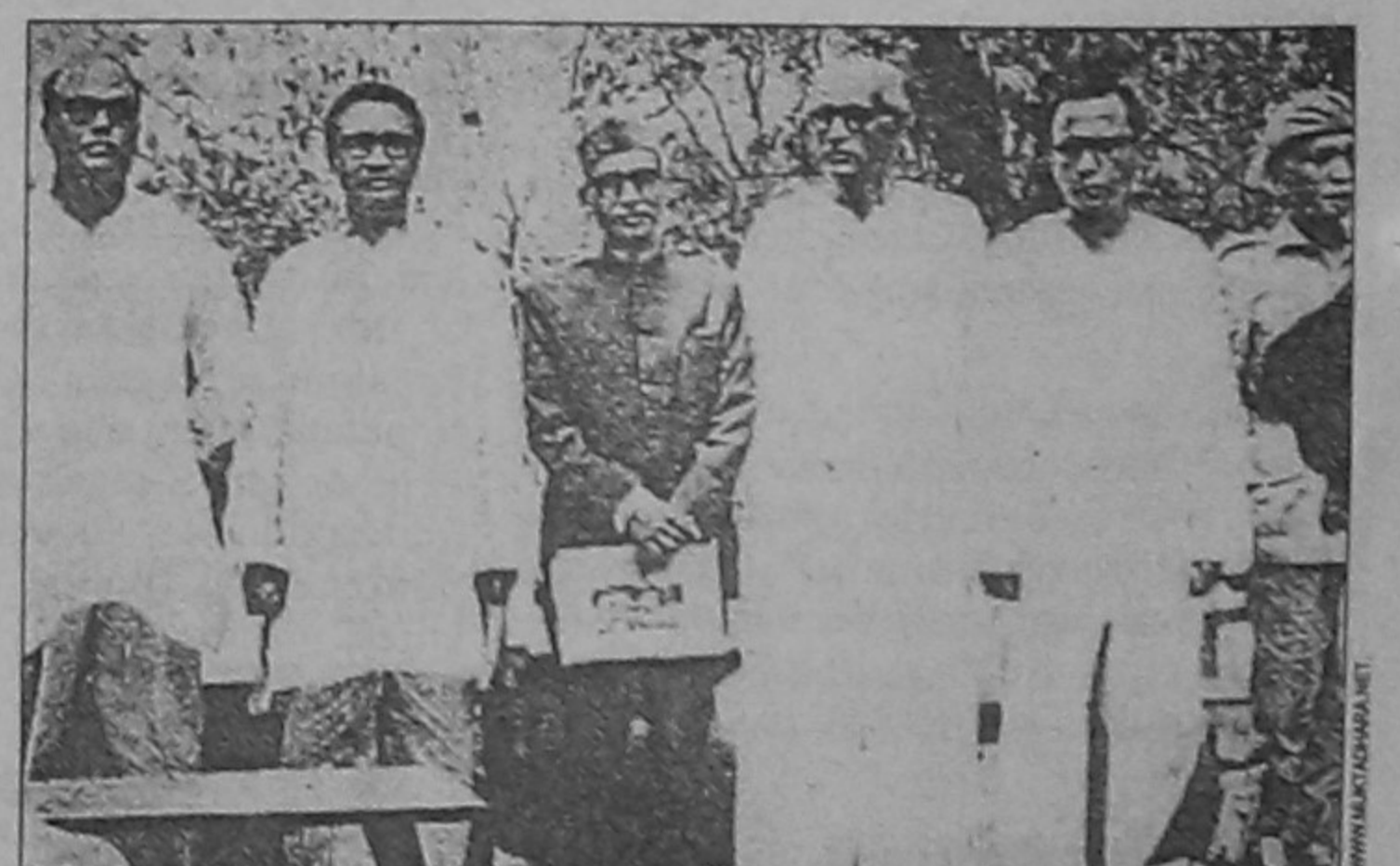
In the absence of Bangabandhu, formation of a Bangladesh government within only two weeks of 25th March by Tajuddin Ahmed and his trusted companions is historically the most important event in 1971.

In spite of limited resources, facilities and bargaining power the Mujibnagar government consisting of the elected parliament members of the 1970 election - under Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed (and acting president Nazrul Islam, ministers AHM

Kamruzzaman and Mansur Ali, and C-in-C General MAG Osmani) prudently managed the nine months of wartime.

The headquarters of the Mujibnagar Government (also Bangladesh war headquarters) was situated at 8, Theatre Road, Calcutta (later renamed Shakespeare Sarani, Kolkata). And the centrepiece was the prime minister's humble living and office rooms. Momentous conferences and decisions were taken here despite continuous fear of Pakistani commando and air attacks. Now very few people know anything about Mujibnagar headquarters. In my long search I saw only 2-3 bad quality photographs of it.

So, I would request the Liberation War Museum, Bangabandhu Museum, National Museum and other



museums to precisely recreate the core 1971 Cabinet War Rooms and miniature replication of the Mujibnagar Government Headquarters (people who worked there are still alive).

At least, the museums can display artefacts, photographs, documents and films related to Mujibnagar

Government Headquarters in a separate gallery. The Bangladesh government may request the Indian government to hand over possession of that historic house to us.

The young Bangladeshis should know what happened in 1971.
M. Emad
Oxford, UK