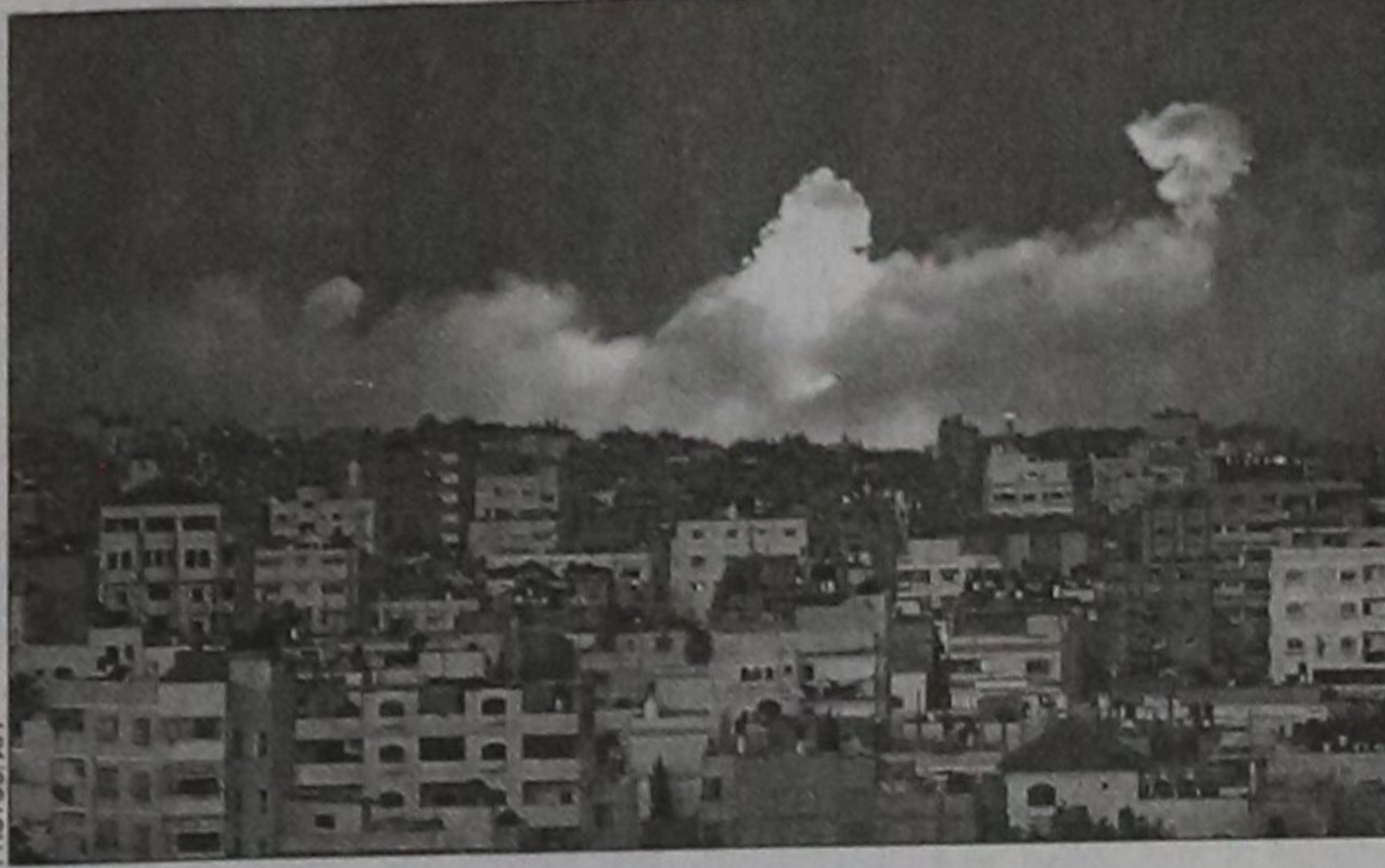


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

# Israeli atrocities



Killing of innocent Palestinians, including children and women, has crossed the brutality of Nazis. Till now more than 800 have been killed and 2,500 injured. There is place in hospital to treat the wounded innocent victims. It has been well understood that invasion of Gaza in the name of liquidating Hamas is show of power to gain public support in the upcoming Israeli election. This reminds us of the US strategy when the Bush regime invaded Iraq in the name of democracy against WMD or terror.

Now is the time the whole world should unite, especially the Arab world, for stopping the Israeli atrocities.  
W. Islam  
One-mail

Israel has failed to fight Hamas, so they are purposely killing innocent women and children of Palestine. Killing innocent people, women and children is a work of terrorists, not of a state. Israel blames Hamas for attacking their civilians, isn't Israel itself carrying out the worst terrorist attacks?

If the definition of terrorism doesn't change for Israel in the UN dictionary, the situation will worsen further in the days ahead.

Mohammad Faruk  
Nurjahan road  
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Hatred begets hatred. While the world craves for peace and prosper-

ity, yet again we see another act of senseless brutality. Let us really begin to put diplomatic pressure on Israel to change its tactics as military invasion can never be the answer. It is through wisdom, dialogue and trust building that humanity can be united. We have to focus on making the world an inclusive place for all.

I forcefully submit my views that Israel should desist from all forms of military operations. I would also request the citizens of the attacked country to have patience and work vigorously for a diplomatic solution. Let us awaken the giant called the UN to take centre-stage in these negotiations without taking sides.

Ziaur Rahman  
CEO  
IITM

zones with an agreed International Date Line (IDL) are scientific concepts introduced much later to enable the Gregorian Calendar to be applied throughout the whole globe in a consistent manner. These concepts were unknown to Pope Gregory or the Christian world at the time, and although the accepted solar calendar worldwide is known as the Gregorian Calendar, it is actually the scientific International Calendar. England only accepted this calendar in 1752 and Russia around 1910, showing about a passage of 400 years for the maturity of a local calendar into a worldwide phenomenon with scientific expertise which does not violate any religious belief or tradition but is neutral and for the benefit of all mankind.

My book Islamic Calendar: A Global Blueprint proposes a simple lunar calendar which will conform to all Islamic traditions but which must entail the knowledge of latitude, longitude, time zones, and IDL also, to give this calendar a global span of 24 hours and which will be accurate for thousands of years into the future. This calendar will eliminate the need to sight the new moon or consult the sun-moon conjunction tables for each lunar month because this is already taken into consideration in the formulation of the calendar and calculation of days for each Arabic month with a leap month every two years. The mathematics is very easy and perfect.

Although I am a chartered marine/mechanical engineer by profession with a title of 'European Engineer', I had to privately finance, study and obtain a Master's Degree in Astrophysics from University of London to polish up my calendar to perfection with both religious and scientific knowledge, and I can certainly see the futility of attempting to arrive at an Islamic Calendar which will be as accurate as say the present day 'Gregorian' Calendar with only the religious knowledge or research therein as is done by Muslim scholars, all in good faith.

Further details can be obtained from my website: [www.oaktownpublications.com](http://www.oaktownpublications.com)  
Engineer Shafi Ahmed  
London  
UK

## Flatterers, all around

History says the flatterers are more dangerous than the opponents.

The flatterers, being very close circle colleagues, blindfold their leader by flattering with adjectives which the leader does not deserve, they create a barrier around their leader, keep him/her away from the people, do not allow him/her to know the actual position on the ground about his or her popularity, do not allow their leader to know about the economic condition, they brain wash the leader by bringing in hired supporters in his/her public meetings and so on. By doing these they separate the leader from the public and exploit them.

The latest example: BNP leader Begum Khaleda Zia. Her flatterers, mostly the nearest leaders of her party, flooded her public meetings, bringing in a huge number of attendants paying only Tk 100 and a packet of tehari just to cheer their leader in the meetings when she spoke.

She was overwhelmed to see her fake popularity and became confident of her own popularity.

As she was always kept

surrounded by her flatterers, she could never know what was happening in the country. These flatterers, keeping her blindfolded, were fishing in the darkness and stole everything they could steal from the state. They became rich overnight and Begum Zia has lost everything.

Not only leaders in Bangladesh, everywhere in the world many such leaders who were surrounded by flatterers perished in the end. I don't have the audacity of advising our new leader, but I want to remind her that please do not allow the flatterers to surround you.

Please read newspapers of both your supporters and opponents to know the reality.  
Shafiqul Islam, NY

## People's mandate for change

The Ninth National Parliamentary Election--fair, credible and acceptable to all--was held amid a peaceful, convivial and favourable environment wherein the Awami League-led grand alliance unpredictably secured a landslide victory with a huge number of seats.

To translate people's dream into reality, the grand alliance has to pass the 'acid test' and overcome innumerable obstacles.

We, the new generation, urge the Awami League-led grand alliance to give due importance to the opposition.  
Alamin Al Azad  
Department of Public Administration  
Zahurul Haque Hall  
University of Dhaka

## Fall of BNP

The BNP has been trounced, out of 299 seats, they managed to get only 32 seats. It is very unfortunate for the party which came to power twice.

Three factors contributed to their defeat-- first corruption, second the issue of the trial of war criminals and

third, the price hike of the essentials.

But I think the last two issues should not have influenced the election. As for the war criminals, Sheikh Haskin was also in power, but she did not take any steps and in 1972 Sheikh Mujibur Rahman showed clemency to such criminals. Recently, the issue came to the forefront and has been drilled in the people's minds, the new and young voters, who do not know the real facts. They became outraged and refrained from voting for the BNP.

A great number of people blamed Khaleda Zia for the sky rocketing prices of essential commodities, but it was not the fault of the BNP, the caretaker government was responsible for it.

Anyway, the Awami League has won, we have to wait and see how it deals with all the problems.  
Nur Jahan  
Chittagong

## A grand opportunity

The caretaker government has delivered what they came to do almost two years ago. One must congratulate the CTG, the Election Commission and, last but not least, the Army. They worked together and with each other to make the voter list, the national ID card and ultimately gave us one of the finest elections which was conducted not only peacefully but with an overwhelming participation from all. It was a long wait for almost two years but they did manage to give an election that might create yet another milestone for Bangladesh.

When the present caretaker government took over with the backing of the military they had an overwhelming support but as the time was passing the people seem to have been getting tired and restless. But at last they regained the confidence with the just completed elec-

tion. The uniqueness of this election is the number of new young voters, almost 30%, and the number of women voters. Not only they have been enrolled in the list but went to the polling booth to exercise their franchise by voting for the candidate of their choice. One thing that has come out very clear and distinct is that the people want trial of the 1971 war criminals and the collaborators (Razakars, Al Badr and Al Shams) of the Pakistan military. This they have made very clear by routing out not only those suspected individuals but also the party that has become identified with those elements. They have also given a clear signal that they won't tolerate corrupt convicted politicians.

The people have spoken and now it's the responsibility of the winning party to stand up to the hour of need. The nation has given them the mandate to take care of the awful past when in 1971 almost 3 million of our brothers and sisters were brutally killed, but those responsible could never be brought to justice. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman began the process but couldn't complete it as he was brutally assassinated. We expect the new government, to be led by his daughter Sheikh Hasina, to complete the task and lead us out of that dark past.

The elected government has got the mandate to bring about a change, but they alone can never do it. It's the people who must be taken into confidence and together we can march forward to build the Sonar Bangla our freedom fighters fought for. This is not a myth or mirage because we can build the Sonar Bangla if we put our mind into it. Let us forget greed, hatred and back biting. Let us commit ourselves to nation building and muktijuddher chetona.  
Akku Chowdhury  
One-mail

## Race for supremacy

The massacre of Mumbai is an indirect recognition of the growing importance of India and China in the global economy during the coming decade; after the flirting with US\$ (as admitted by the rich Western industrialised powers).

While India is facing emergency, the emergency in Bangladesh was being withdrawn before the general elections. Sounds contradictory, but it is difficult to make predictions in the fast-changing situation in South Asia and the Asean (note the hangama in Bangkok).

Muslim Pakistan is facing attacks by extremist Muslims; and the US is concerned whether the militants would seize control of the nuclear military ware and use it against the West! Quiz: umbrella presence of the West's military might in S Asia, led by the US and NATO, for protection of Democracy? In this IT age, the definitions of concepts change rapidly!

Our deshi political leaders have been protesting so long over the absence of a level playing field in Bangladesh. Now they have to tune into the uneven playing field in Saarc and the global financial fields.

Politics is never going to be the same again. Our problem (in Saarc) is demographical--high density of population; in spite of the presence of resources. In fact HR is our biggest asset; but it is being misused and misdirected by the political pundits--hence the influx of the mullahs, with long sermons.

The young generations have to save the emerging nations. The Aladdin's old lamp does not work anymore--the rubbing magic is gone. Cut the bush, and re-harvest the beautiful forest.  
A Mawaz  
Dhaka

## Minority issue

I felt disturbed while reading a section of an editorial published in DS on 29 December 2008 with the headline "2001 still haunts Hindus in Barisal."

Are we living in medieval ages or ages before Christ or in a valley of madness or in a deaf and dumb society? How in a democratic country the minority community cannot exercise their civil rights? If this system still exists, then who is this gentleman and who are his muscle men and can we not eliminate these antisocial elements from society forever? During the liberation war of 1971, Hindus, Christians & Buddhists also fought for an independent Bangladesh along with Muslims. So the issue of minority & majority does not exist in this country any more. All are equal and all should be treated as equal citizens of the country and no one is above the law. The

government of India has omitted the mention of religious status in their passport just to recognize every man & women as Indians and not by their religion.

We wish in future not a single Anil or a Rozario or a Chakma will be discriminated against for their religious or ethnic identity.  
Dr. Kazi Mizanur Rahman  
Banani R/A, Dhaka

## Task ahead

It's new in Bangladesh. In 2001, it was perhaps an anti-incumbency vote for the Awami League, though there is ample evidence available now with the Election Commission database that the 2001 elections might have been rigged. However, this time it is a positive vote.

Despite all attempts by the BNP and the Jamaat to wipe out the Awami league during their coalition rule, the later emerged as the single largest party. Maybe many will try to take credit for the large turnout of voters, but this time it is due to our resilience, and to our younger and women voters.

Tasks ahead for the winners? First thing first, they will have to deliver good governance. Apart from addressing the issues of food prices, power, education and employment for the poor, they will have to address the larger political issues of pledges. But it's premature to get into those specifics at this point of time. We have to see whether the religion-based politics is under control or not. I think, they are not dead, but certainly weakened. They are, perhaps, at their lowest ebb point. Now their relevance would depend as to what role the new AL-led alliance-elect and they would play. The losers should realise that the people are fed up with their backward-looking behaviour and politics of vengeance blended with corruption and conspiracies.

Now people like to see that the new government will not only be a two-party affair. They should believe in building bridges. Their task is to build bridges of relationship and trust. It is not necessary that if something went wrong in the past that would be repeated again.

There is a generational shift. The winners should work with the likes of all; they must keep all channels of communication open. That would work. We need peace, progress and development. This is not an easy task, but it is a golden opportunity for us again to deliver. This government should be representative of all regions, peoples of all age groups, parties, and interests.  
Sirajul Islam  
Pisciculture Housing Society  
Shyamoli  
Dhaka

## Soap operas - our daily diet

Being a marginalized male in a female dominated in front of TV household, I have been forced to watch the endless series of Soap Operas on the three popular Indian Channels evening after evening and far into the night (sports, news; NatGeo, Discovery, others only during commercial breaks). Sleep eventually comes as a merciful escape into the world of reality. My observations (since this is the time of Observers, foreign and local!):

1. Female characters, good, bad and ugly dominate the families on view. A few are very clever, but most, especially the heroines, incredibly stupid.
2. All of them have an endless supply of gorgeous, branded clothes, are loaded with jewellery and cosmetics, so much so, that they even sleep wearing them.
3. They all live in servant-less palatial mansions, with innumerable rooms where everyone from family, guests to vagrants etc can be accommodated. They exist on a diet of grass and leaves and the highest point is a meal of aloo paratha.
4. Male characters, are even more stupid than the most stupid females, and are moulded to do their bidding and intrigues, while they are overseeing multi-thousand crore rupee industrial empires.
5. The alpha females lie, cheat, withhold pertinent facts and go back on promises while weaving webs of intrigues to bring their adversaries, usually the hero/heroine, into endless problems.
6. Males, even though multi-billionaires, are totally powerless in matters of family policy, strategies and activities and must kow-tow to the dictates of the alpha females.
7. Possession of cash, jewellery, land, property and internal power are the criteria for the

alpha females' intrigues that are cruel, ruthless and inhumane in most cases.

8. Alpha females have an army of sons, nephews and zombie henchmen to do her bidding, whom she keeps protecting even when the truth is laid bare.

9. The females are not above taking dubious, questionable or even criminal characters as bed-fellows to assist them in their nefarious schemes.

10. When all else fails and they are hemmed in on all sides, the stupid heroines are not above cajoling and even threatening their favourite deity, pir, baba etc for help and are usually obliged by an impressive show of bells ringing, bolts of lightning & thunder and sudden gusts of winds.

All in all, these soap operas are an insult to one's intelligence but then Good Heavens, it has just occurred to me,--- has something similar not been the history of politics in Bangladesh for the last couple of decades?

Sikander Ahmed  
Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka

## Hijri New Year

I welcome the letter by Eng. Enamul Huq on 4 January about an Islamic Calendar like the Gregorian Calendar which has the same day and date spanning the whole globe in a period of 24 hours. However, for this we need to learn very simple mathematics and physics in addition to what is in our holy scriptures to give the act of 'moon-sighting', which is always a local matter, a global effect which does not go against Islamic traditions. When the Gregorian Calendar was introduced in 1582 AD to supersede the Julian Calendar it was only applied in Italy and a handful of European countries, because it was still only accurate in a local manner. The invention of the marine chronometer, and the division of the globe into latitudes and longitudes, and longitudes with further 24 hour time

# Our dreams



I am not a great fan of the Awami League. Yet, I have accepted the people's verdict. Now remains a great future to see where the new leaders will set a trend of sacrifices and relentless endeavours to make the lot of the millions of this ill-fated nation shine with pride. They are our new leaders. We long to come out of the vortex of darkness into the colourful world of success in human freedom. A freedom where we will cherish our long lost norms of social justice and peace amongst all without any mud-slinging politics of revenge and hate.

The leaders need to remember that the wind at the tree top, the lift

of the eagle from the hills and the dust in the morning sun make us see temporal beauty but the reality is the tree needs to have strong roots not to fall down, the eagle needs to fly high to see its target and the dust needs to give way to a cleaner world. We wait for the bright future. We can do it and we will do it. We will become the mightiest nation one day and yes we dare to dream. Lucky are those who are living in our motherland as those of us who long to return are like lost tear-drops left to dry in foreign soils.

Mufassil Islam  
Human Rights Advocate  
UK

PHOTO: SHAHADAT HOSSAIN