

# Pledges to Rana victims unfulfilled

## The matter admits of no delay

**R**ANA Plaza disaster is a blot on the nation and the unfulfilled commitment made to the family of the victims and the survivors only adds to their anguish. In fact the action of the concerned persons and groups has added doubts in the minds of the international community whether we can at all regenerate the vitality in the sector where "Made in Bangladesh" will not be disincentive for the buyers at the retail level.

A report presented on Saturday by the CPD on the progress made so far after 100 days of the disaster paints a rather dismal picture regarding the fulfillment of commitments made by the government, the BGMEA and other stakeholders. Although the PMO's office have disbursed some compensation money, it is regrettable that as yet 700 members of the family of the dead or missing are yet to received what they were promised by the PM. And much of the BGMEA's promise remains a promise only.

What the government should take note of and what was amply expressed in the discussion is that this was no disaster but cold blooded murder caused by the dismal failure of governance, particularly of the failure to exercise oversight at every level. And what is required is a strict regime to ensure that such lapses, many of them due to political pressure, did not occur. In this regard we endorse the CPD's initiative to form a forum with 14 other organisations to act as a pressure group to ensure that whatever was promised is delivered.

# Decline in HSC results

## Congrats to achievers against odds

**T**HE results of higher secondary level tests, the second largest series of public examinations in the country having been less than expected, an assessment of the reasons behind the poorer showing has got underway.

The drop in success rate is attributed to frequent shutdown and destructive political programmes that turned the examination routines upside down. The restive situation led to loss of concentration and focus of the examinees on the tasks at hand. The prime minister and the education minister pointed to the shutdowns as the prime reason for the diminished results but three other reasons are cited by analysts.

First, introduction of creative question papers in three more subjects aside from Bangla; second, lack of training in setting question papers and evaluating the scripts; and third, doing away with informal instructions to exercise leniency in evaluating scripts in the face of public criticism. Thus, the results are in part true reflection of the performance of the middle and lower segments of the total number of examinees.

The percentage of pass under the eight education boards averaged 71.13 percent, a decline by 4.37 percent compared to last year's performance. Also, in the high achiever GPA 5 category, the number has fallen from last year's 51,469 to 46,736 examinees this time around. While congratulating the successful candidates we express our worries over giving such huge numbers a berth in higher education and the future of those who have failed in the exams.

# A safe haven for war criminals

**G**OOD news for war criminals! There is no reason for them to worry any more. They can freely violate human rights and find a safe haven for them. According to BBC, 100 suspected war criminals applied for UK immigration. Some of them have been living there for years. They come from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Rwanda, Serbia and Sri Lanka.

The BBC report did not mention that some criminals had already acquired British citizenship and had been living in the UK under the protection of British law. One of them is Chowdhury Mueenuddin against whom there are charges in the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) for involvement in the killing of intellectuals in Bangladesh in 1971.

Although the Home Office does not intend to make the UK a "refuge for war criminals", the British courts usually block deportation on human rights ground. Should the violators of human rights be granted the privileges of human rights? The answer should be NO and there should be an international consensus on this issue. We handed over a murder suspect, Mohiuddin Bablu, to the British authorities in 2011. Why shouldn't they hand over Mueenuddin now to face charges of crimes against humanity in Bangladesh?

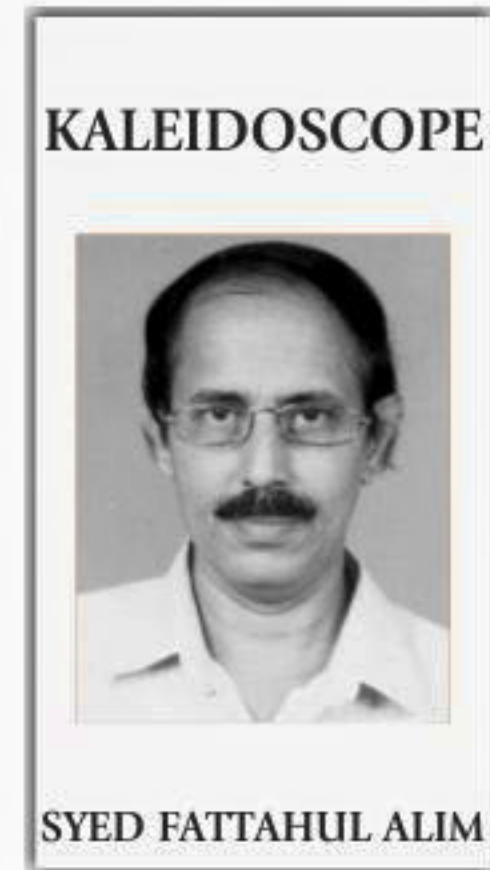
We also have convicted criminals in the USA, Canada, Pakistan and India. The legal procedures for deportation in the USA are too complicated and lengthy. Canada does not deport criminals to countries practicing death penalty. Pakistan is unlikely to deport criminals who once worked for their army. It is, however, reported that Bangladesh and India are likely to exchange suspected and convicted criminals soon.

The statistics of suspected criminals in the UK are astounding. Between 2005 and 2012, 700 suspected criminals were identified by UK immigration. From January 2012 to March 2013, 800 cases were detected where individuals were suspected of war crimes and crimes against humanity. With unabated violence persisting in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and other countries, the number of criminals seeking asylum in the UK is likely to multiply in the near future.

I wonder how long the British will feel secure with thousands of suspected criminals roaming about freely in their country. Will the safe haven remain safe forever?

The writer is a former chief engineer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission.

# Waiting for a miracle?



SYED FATTAHUL ALIM

**KALEIDOSCOPE**

THE pattern is familiar. Since the 1990s, before every election for the Jatiya Sangsad (parliament), the political situation becomes dicier with every passing day. The atmosphere this time seems even worse than before.

The efforts being made earlier by the civil society, the intelligentsia and the diplomatic circles to pressure the two major political forces, the ruling Awami League (AL) and the opposition BNP, so they may reach an understanding through dialogue on the election-time government seem to have run out of steam. Seeing that their persuasions and advice have fallen on deaf ears, they appear to have resigned to the status quo -- the state of unending confrontation and standoff.

Meanwhile, battle lines are being drawn between the main rivals in our politics: the AL and the BNP. Obviously, the AL has taken a hard-line policy towards the opposition's demand for a caretaker government to hold next general election.

This stance of the ruling party eludes some among us who still believe in the possibility of a peaceful transition of power from the present one to the next elected government. How can AL take such an uncompromising stance, given the recent debacle it faced in the five city corporation elections?

AL policymakers are certainly not so naive as to be sold on the notion that results of the recent local government elections, held so close to the upcoming national polls, will have little impact on the latter. They appear to have other things in mind.

It looks like the AL has reframed its electoral strategy to face the opposition. To the ongoing politico-ideological war against the BNP-Jamaat alliance has been added the propaganda campaign targeting the orthodox Islamic clerics' outfit, Hefazat-e-Islam. By these means, the AL has been further broadening the scope of its pro-and anti-liberation narrative to accommodate the wider section of liberal democratic and secular elements into the fold. Hefazat issue is being conveniently exploited to give a modernistic twist to the AL's political discourse vis-à-vis that of the opposition's. AL may also like to exploit the recent developments like High Court's cancelling the BNP ally, Jamaat-e-Islami's status as a registered political party with the Election Commission (EC) to its advantage. All this AL finds grist for the mill. That is because, cornered by so many odds, Jamaat will be goaded

into getting more violent in a last-ditch effort to keep its existence. BNP will only be too eager to have a more desperate Jamaat by its side to launch a tougher movement against the government.

If that happens, and the recent utterances of BNP leaders also point strongly to that direction, the government will be happier. It will then be able to launch its two-pronged politico-ideological attack against BNP-led alliance. Through this campaign it would try to present itself to what it terms pro-liberation as well as democratic-secular-liberal quarters at home and to the western powers abroad as the only alternative before them, if democracy and all the ideals it stand for are to be saved in Bangladesh. The opposition backed by Jamaat and other religion-based parties and groups would naturally be portrayed as forces out to destroy these higher ideals of democracy. In such scheme of things, AL's campaign against Islamic forces-backed opposition would look like a struggle between the forces of democracy, modernity and enlightenment one one side versus those of reaction and backwardness on the other.

How far this strategy would work is another matter. Outsiders, who have been watching our politics and its history closely, may not be an instant sucker for this posture of the L. That is also true of all the liberal democrats at home.

The opposition BNP, though a centre-right political party with pluralistic democratic programme, has willy-nilly found itself in this far right politico-ideological straitjacket.

But to all appearances, far from making any efforts to come up with a counter-strategy to get out of this predicament, it is rather trying to make the most of this different ball game. In fact, it is focusing on the vote bank among of the religion-based groups and parties.

The issue of religion, Islam in particular, is looked at differently by a rural voter than an educated urban one. To the rural voter, religion is part of his/her existence. The BNP is trying to cash in on the sentiments of the majority, the tradition-bound and less educated

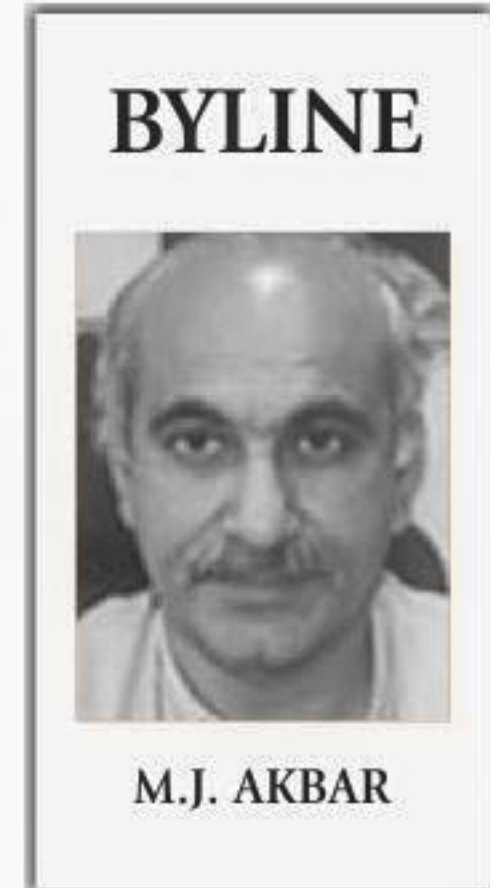
section of the electorate, whose feelings, it (BNP) thinks, have been hurt by government's messing up with the religious issue.

It is not that AL is not aware of this danger, for they have already been blaming BNP and Hefazat for playing the religion card in the recent city corporation elections resulting in its electoral debacle.

Even as they know where the fault lines of their electoral strategies lie, the AL and the BNP would not stop trying to overreach themselves. They are perhaps waiting for a miracle to happen in their favour. Given the history of the last two decades plus years, they should have been wiser.

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# And the nominee for Best Hasty Pudding is....



M.J. AKBAR

**BYLINE**

VERY industry must be permitted the luxury of self-congratulation, particularly if no one else is too eager to do the honours. The foundations of this modern excess were laid in the little town of Hollywood, created in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by an eccentric millionaire determined to nurture the ideals of abstinence. Look where good intentions got us.

When Hollywood grew up and rewarded itself with stars, sex and alcohol, it realised the need for some symbol of recognition for its art form. Ergo, the Oscars. Statues breed statues. There are more categories of awards now than cinema knew existed when it was born.

It is surprising that journalism, which is no less creative than Hollywood, has not yet invented an award for the best news factories, the assembly line of politicians who become famous by issuing an endless stream of statements. The number of contenders would be within limits. The major parties have about a dozen each; the smaller ones two or three. Most of them are official nominees, but there are an irrepressible few who float in some greater realm, their legitimacy assured by proximity to higher powers or celebrity status inherited from an earlier career. To paraphrase the charming P.G. Wodehouse, master of the English language, the former are grunted, the latter largely disgruntled.

We could begin with just one Spokesbite of the Year award. Later, we could diversify: Best Example of Law of Unintended Consequences; Finest Double Entendre by Ageing Celebrity in Search of Rajya Sabha Seat; Best Misunderstanding of Hindi Slang Lost in Translation into English, to name a few. The possibilities are fertile: Best Mismatch of English Grammar and Indian Meaning; Worst Distortion of Intent by Twitter Limitations; Most Acrobatic Fall on Flattery Oily; Finest Self-Goal in Competition for Minority Vote Bank; or even Most Creative Abuse of Existing Foe who Might be Tomorrow's Friend. There should be no shortage of sponsors either, since this part of the ceremony is bound to be infinitely entertaining.

Sceptics are bound to wonder whether any politicians will actually come to pick up their awards. Audiences, inside or outside a theatre, would be bewildered if the recipient was unable to thank a Supreme Leader, wife, husband, parents, ghost writer, constituents and that wise-cracking pal who dreamt up the gag in the first place.

Sceptics are vastly mistaken. Politicians are far smarter than them. They know that 90% of a television audience only remembers that you got an award, not why you got it.

The only reasonable condition that politicians would impose was that the award be handed over by a celebrity who is still celebrated, like a film star who remains in play when high-profile roles are being discussed by the big bosses of popular movies. If Amitabh Bachchan is unavailable and Katrina Kaif is busy, there are others. But there is nothing to be gained by receiving an award from anyone reduced to the art cinema circuit. Even worse would be Raj Babbar smiling at Shatrughan Sinha and, for the next award, Sinha returning the favour to Babbar. Nor would anyone care too much for a mutual back-scratch between Digvijay Singh and Shakeel Ahmad.

The Prize of Prizes should be reserved for a Best Hasty Pudding Prize, offered for verbal concoctions cooked up within the blink of a sleepy eyelid. This would be a test of intrinsic individual capability, rather than a paragraph patiently constructed over a languorous afternoon. Judges

would measure worth by the taste of the pudding; it would be of no concern to them whether it was healthy or not, since only political parties suffer ill-effects from the instant wit and wisdom of their preferred chefs. Media's gratitude emanates from the fact that journalism is the best restaurant where such pudding can be served. Nothing sells news more efficiently than politicians bleeding to death from self-inflicted wounds. The laughter of the audience is both free and contagious, two virtues that media values above all else.

These great chefs of mass consumption slip from their high standards only because the temptation to produce fast food has become almost irresistible in an age when social media is as popular as a hamburger. Social media is a term that reveals all with the stark simplicity of nudity. Any comment longer than 140 characters, or a slapdash pastry thrown on the face of a screen page, is ipso facto anti-social.

Discourse, therefore, is about accusation, not comprehension. This is perfect for the latest version of television dialogue, which bridges brevity with hysteria. Anyone who seeks any more is dumped into the dustbin of boredom. Do not blame journalists alone. This is what the viewer wants; this is what the viewer gets.

Obviously there should be a lifetime achievement award as well, for shortest sentence with maximum impact. It would be inappropriate to hand out a statue for this. A tweezer could be a good substitute.

The writer is Editor of The Sunday Guardian, published from Delhi, India on Sunday, published from London and Editorial Director, India Today and Headlines Today.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Compensate Rana Plaza victims

According to July 25 TDS report, many victim families of Rana Plaza disaster didn't get any compensation. The family members and children of Rana Plaza victims gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar to demand compensation recently. In many cases, the victims were the only earning members of their families. I think the



government has received a huge amount of money as donation for the victims which they should distribute to the affected families. In addition, BGMEA should also compensate them. I request the government to compensate all the victims' families before Eid-ul-fitr.

M.A. Kashem  
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

## Acting morally

A photograph appeared in the Star magazine of 26<sup>th</sup> July under the title "Caught in the Quota Conundrum," where a man was being flogged by a group of BCL cadres for protesting the unethical quota system. As many as 8/9 photojournalists were seen flocking around the poor soul and busy taking pictures from various angles. None of the photojournalists took the moral stand to stop the heinous act. We only wonder when people will become proactive to protest against evil forces.

Mashudul Haque  
Dhaka

## Need for nighttime traffic police

The other night I was on my way home to Sir Syed Road, Mohammadpur with my ailing mother after having visited her doctor at Ibn Sina Hospital, Kallyanpur. It took us more than an hour to go to the hospital, whereas it should not take more than 15 minutes. But while returning, the situation even worsened. It was after 11 pm and we were stuck in severe traffic jam as the heavy vehicles like lorries and trucks were making their way into the city. In Dhaka after 11 pm, there is no traffic police in city roads to control the traffic. May I humbly request the traffic police chief to seriously consider the matter and deploy traffic police 24/7 on Dhaka roads?

Khandaker Zia Hasan  
Special Correspondent Bangladesh  
Weekly Jogajog, Canada

## National agriculture policy

The ministry of agriculture has recently made a committee headed by Dr. Wais Kabir, Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) to finally review the draft of national agricultural policy; putting special emphasis on simplifying the language so that the content can be understood by common people including the farmers.

It is gathered that the agriculture minister is determined to release and publish the national agriculture policy during the tenure of the present government. We are hopeful to get it soon.

Professor M Zahidul Haque  
Dean, Faculty of Agriculture  
SAU, Dhaka

## Comments on news report, "Ban not on govt's plan," published on August 3, 2013

**Abbasuddin**  
It is actually the voters who should have banned Jamaat from politics.

**MH Khan**  
This will probably be a politically correct decision.

**Abul Kashem**  
Common people want to live in peace. We don't want to see repetition of anarchy and other undesirable situations. All parties are requested to restrain from issuing provocation.

**Zaid Bin Kalam**  
Banning Jamaat is the crying demand of the time and if the government fails to pay heed to it, time will take its toll very dearly!

**Wind**  
Jamaat is the hell and BNP has entered the door of hell.

\*\*\*\*  
"Weak EC for whom?"  
(August 1, 2013)

**Abul Kashem**  
EC drama is in its latest episode.

**Wind**  
This is very illogical and ridiculous decision.

**sl\_jay1946**  
Perhaps the yes-man chosen by the PM is on course to carry out his blue print, otherwise how can our national nephew so confidently claims that AL will win the 2013 national elections which is several months away? So, isn't this the only 'logical' and 'prudent' decision?