

# Ershad netted in a nocturnal drive

## Free participation in elections indeed!

LAST Thursday Ershad was picked up in a movie-style late night swoop from his Baridihara residence under what was touted as Rab security cover and driven to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) ostensibly for 'treatment.'

Even if he had a medical condition he could on his own have gone to seek medical attention -- which he has done for all these years -- rather than being forcibly chaperoned by security personnel to the CMH.

However much the government might try to pull wool over the public eye, the machinations and purpose behind it are too transparent and manifest to be lost on the people.

Ever since Ershad fell out with 'Mahajote' and decided to withdraw from election unless all parties participated in it, his relations with the government soured. When all persuasion failed, attempt is now on to bring even a part of his party with Raushan Ershad and some others in the lead.

So, the government picked up Ershad apparently against his will to keep him available for persuasion to change his mind. This is blatant misuse of state power for political purposes and can only further cast doubt on the quality of the election, corroding its credibility further.

Throughout yesterday, Ershad was kept incommunicado, further fuelling speculation that he is in some form of custody. Whatever may be the politics behind it, such illegal confinement of any citizen -- leave alone a former President and current party leader -- is highly condemnable. We want his immediate release.

# Blockades disrupt supply chains

## Multiple sectors under strain

VIOLENT politics is squeezing the life out of many sectors. These include both the poultry industry and the milk producers. Both are perishable items, the latter more than the former. Both provide nutrition, the latter is essential for newborns, growing children and the aged, whilst poultry is an important means of protein for the entire population. Neither can be ignored. Yet that is precisely where we face with our politics today. The noose that has been tightened around the normal flow of goods around the country is killing these essential industries.

It is not only nutrition that is at stake. Millions are involved in the production of poultry and milk. Since November, there have been more than 23 days of shutdowns that have dealt a severe blow to the supply and distribution chains. With regards to collection of milk, Milk-Vita alone used to collect 250,000 litres of milk per day, which is not happening. A million cooperative farmers are dumping their milk on to the streets. According to newspaper reports the poultry industry has suffered losses worth Tk.40 billion over the last quarter. Farms have had to destroy nearly 2 million day-old chicks every week and more than 30million eggs, the aggregate value of which is more than Tk.200 million. Perhaps these data mean nothing to our political leaders but they mean everything to millions of workers in the industry and the companies that are going down under since political egos are more important than the livelihoods of millions.

# AL-BNP's copy-paste politics

ALAMGIR KHAN

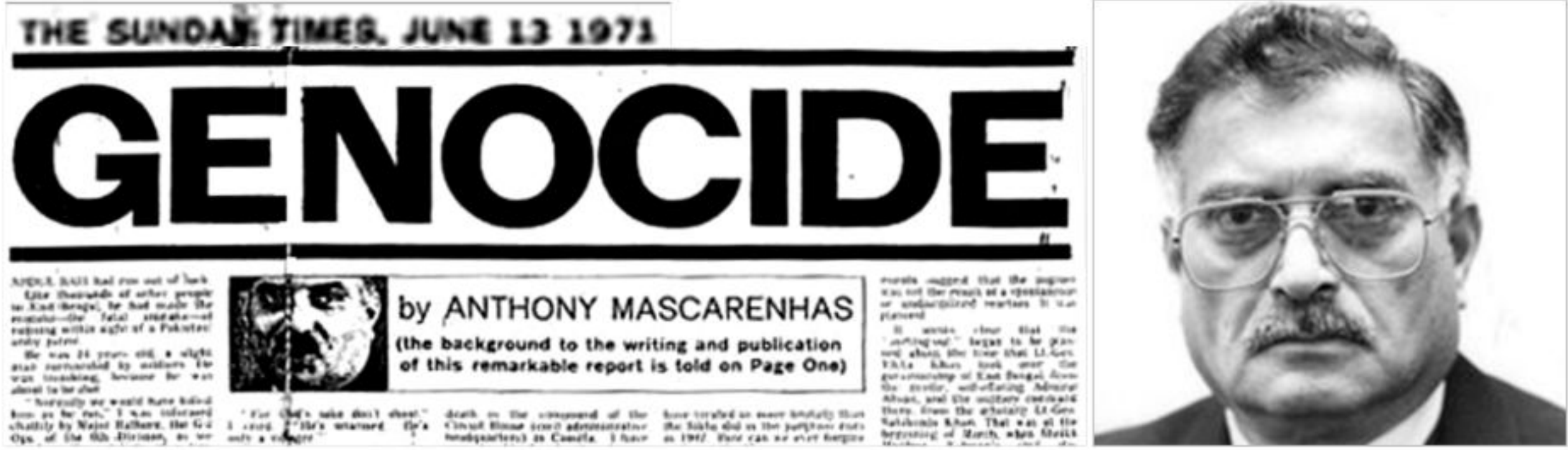
IN this digital age, everything has become simple and the politics of the AL and the BNP simpler. They copy and paste each other's political deeds. They fight equally well for having seats in parliament and copy-paste each other in shunning that House and in drawing salaries and all facilities without performing their duties properly. If ever they appear briefly together in that house, they copy each other's bad behaviour and abusive language as well.

Then in 1994, Ninian had to come and propose formation of an all-party cabinet, but the AL rejected it and demanded a non-partisan caretaker government system. Now the AL has formed a deceptive all-party government, BNP has rejected it and Taranco has come to put an end to their squabble. The BNP staged a farcical election in 1996 and now the AL is going to copy that. Then Khaleda showed her adamant love for the continuation of the parliamentary process and people laid their lives at Hasina's call to force Khaleda to accept her demand of a caretaker government. Khaleda had to accept it. Now Hasina is in love with the same in the same adamant way and people's lives are wasted again to stop her to unilaterally make right the constitutional mistake made then.

Since 1991 the prime ministership has alternated between Hasina and Khaleda. In the present AL setup, Khaleda has no chance of becoming the prime minister this time. But just suppose Khaleda Zia as the prime minister for this or any other term in future. It is almost certain that people will watch the boring reenactment of the same scene having been on show several times to date. There will be an all-party government led by Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina will be beating her with a non-party-government stick. Both of them will copy-paste each other of what they are saying today. I am copying their speeches today in the hope that I can paste these only substituting the names on that occasion.

The Daily Star published a cartoon on December 1 in which Khaleda is seen setting fire to the chair Hasina is sitting on and the latter trying to put it off by fanning instead of simply getting down. Within a week it copied and pasted it with an article by Dr. Kamal Hossain. It may need to copy-paste it with or without substituting the characters depending on who comes to power once again in near future. In this digital fun, only the analogue lives of the poor are at peril under the 'delete' tab with the mouse in the hands of Hasina and Khaleda.

The writer writes on theatre, education and socio-political issues.



On June 13, 1971, The Sunday Times of London ran a 16 column (2-page) story, titled GENOCIDE, on the atrocities that were being carried out in Bangladesh, then East Pakistan. The world was stunned by this revelatory piece by a Pakistani journalist -- Anthony Mascarenhas -- invited by its military to see the operations conducted by them. Overcome by revulsion of what he saw, he published the following report after moving first his family, and then himself, to UK. The writer was Assistant Editor, Morning News, Karachi.

Given the ongoing War Crimes trial and the death penalty meted out to one of the perpetrators, and to mark the Intellectual Martyrs Day, we reprint The Sunday Times report to remind our readers of the genocide that was perpetrated on the people of Bangladesh. This report completely shattered the Pakistani propaganda effort and helped to turn world public opinion in favour of our Liberation War. This is Part One of a Three Part series. -Editor

ANTHONY MASCARENHAS

### Abdul Bari had run out of luck

Like thousands of other people in East Bengal, he had made the mistake the fatal mistake-of running within sight of a Pakistani army patrol. He was 24 years old, a slight man surrounded by soldiers. He was trembling, because he was about to be shot.

"Normally we would have killed him as he ran," I was informed chattily by Major Rathore, the G-2 Ops. of the 9th Division, as we stood on the outskirts of a tiny village near Mudafarganj, about 20 miles south of Comilla. "But we are checking him out for your sake. You are new here and I see you have a squeamish stomach."

"Why kill him?" I asked with mounting concern. "Because he might be a Hindu or he might be a rebel, perhaps a student or an Awami Leaguer. They know we are sorting them out and they betray themselves by running."

"But why are you killing them? And why pick on the Hindus?" I persisted. "Must I remind you," Rathore said severely, "how they have tried to destroy Pakistan? Now under the cover of the fighting we have an excellent opportunity of finishing them off."

### First glimpse of blood stains

"Of course," he added hastily, "we are only killing the Hindu men. We are soldiers, not cowards like the rebels. They kill our women and children."

I was getting my first glimpse of the stain of blood which has spread over the otherwise verdant land of East Bengal. First it was the massacre of the non-Bengalis in a savage outburst of Bengali hatred. Now it was massacre, deliberately carried out by the West Pakistani army.

The pogrom's victims are not only the Hindus of East Bengal -- who constitute about 10% of the 75 million population -- but also many thousands of Bengali Muslims. These include university and college students, teachers, Awami League and Left-Wing political cadres and every one the army can catch of the 176,000 Bengali military men and police who mutinied on March 26 in a spectacular, though untimely and ill-starred bid, to create an independent Republic of Bangla Desh.

What I saw and heard with unbelieving eyes and ears during my 10 days in East Bengal in late April made it terribly clear that the killings are not the isolated acts of military commanders in the field.

The West Pakistani soldiers are not the only ones who have been killing in East Bengal, of course. On the night of March 25 -- and this I was allowed to report by the Pakistani censor -- the Bengali troops and paramilitary units stationed in East Pakistan mutinied and attacked non-Bengalis with atrocious savagery.

Thousands of families of unfortunate Muslims, many of them refugees from Bihar who chose Pakistan at the time of the partition riots in 1947, were mercilessly wiped out. Women were raped, or had their breasts torn out with specially fashioned knives. Children did not escape the horror: the lucky ones were killed with their parents; but many thousands of others must go through what life remains for them with eyes gouged out and limbs roughly amputated. More than 20,000 bodies of non-Bengalis have been found in the main towns, such as Chittagong, Khulna and Jessore. The real toll, I was told everywhere in East Bengal, may have been as high as 100,000; for thousands of non-Bengalis have vanished without a trace.

The government of Pakistan has let the world know about that first horror. What it has suppressed is the second and worse horror which followed when its own army took over the killing. West Pakistani officials privately calculate that altogether both sides have killed 250,000 people -- not counting those who have died of famine and disease.

Reacting to the almost successful breakaway of the province, which has more than half the country's population, General Yahya Khan's military government is pushing through its own "final solution" of the East Bengal problem.

"We are determined to cleanse East Pakistan once and for all of the threat of secession, even if it means killing of two million people and ruling the province as a colony for 30 years," I was repeatedly told by senior military and civil officers in Dacca and Comilla.

The West Pakistan army in East Bengal is doing exactly that with a terrifying thoroughness.

We had been racing against the setting sun after a visit to Chandpur (the West Pakistan army prudently stays indoors at night in East Bengal) when one of the *jawans* (privates) crouched in the back of the Toyota Land Cruiser called out sharply: "There's a man running, Sahib."

Major Rathore brought the vehicle to an abrupt halt, simultaneously reaching for the Chinese made light machine-gun propped against the door. Less than 200 yards away a man could be seen loping through the knee-high paddy.

"For God's sake don't shoot," I cried. "He's unarmed. He's only a villager." Rathore gave me a dirty look and fired a warning burst.

As the man sank to a crouch in the lush carpet of green, two *jawans* were already on their way to drag him in.

The thud of a rifle butt across the shoulders preceded the questioning.

"Who are you?"  
"Mercy, Sahib! My name is Abdul Bari. I'm a tailor from the New Market in Dacca."  
"Don't lie to me. You're a Hindu. Why were you running?"  
"It's almost curfew time, Sahib, and I was going to my village."  
"Tell me the truth. Why were you running?"

Before the man could answer he was quickly frisked for weapons by a *jawan* while another quickly snatched away his *lungi*. The skinny body that was bared revealed the distinctive traces of circumcision, which is obligatory for Muslims.

### The truckloads of human targets

At least it could be plainly seen that Bari was not a Hindu. The interrogation proceeded.

"Tell me, why were you running?" By this time Bari, wild eyed and trembling violently, could not answer. He buckled at the knees. "He looks like a *fauji*, sir," volunteered one *jawan* as Bari was hauled to his feet, (*Fauji* is the Urdu word for soldier: the army uses it for the Bengali rebels it is hounding.) "Could be," I heard Rathore mutter grimly.

Abdul Bari was clouted several times with the butt end of a rifle, then ominously pushed against a wall. Mercifully his screams brought a young head peeping from the shadows of a nearby hut. Bari shouted something in Bengali. The head vanished.

Moments later a bearded old man came haltingly from the hut. Rathore pounced on him.

"Do you know this man?"  
"Yes, Sahib. He is Abdul Bari."  
"Is he a *fauji*?"  
"No Sahib, he is a tailor from Dacca."  
"Tell me the truth."  
"*Khuda Kassam* (God's oath), Sahib, he is a tailor."

There was a sudden silence. Rathore looked abashed as I told him: "For God's sake let him go. What more proof do you want of his innocence?"

But the *jawans* were apparently unconvinced and kept milling around Bari. It was only after I had once more interceded on his behalf that Rathore ordered Bari to be released. By that time he was a crumpled, speechless heap of terror. But his life had been saved.

### Others have not been as fortunate

For six days as I travelled with the officers of the 9th Division headquarters at Comilla I witnessed at close quarters the extent of the killing. I saw Hindus, hunted from village to village and door to door, shot off-hand after a cursory "short-arm inspection" showed they were uncircumcised.

I have heard the screams of men bludgeoned to death in the compound of the Circuit House (civil administrative headquarters) in Comilla. I have seen truck loads of other human targets and those who had the humanity to try to help them hauled off under the cover of darkness and curfew. I have witnessed the brutality of "kill and burn missions" as the army units, after clearing out the rebels, pursued the pogrom in the towns and the villages.



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I have seen whole villages devastated by "punitive action." And in the officers' mess at night I have listened incredulously as otherwise brave and honourable men proudly chewed over the day's kill.

"How many did you get?" The answers are seared in my memory.

All this is being done, as any West Pakistani officer will tell you, for the "preservation of the unity, the integrity and the ideology of Pakistan." It is, of course, too late for that. The very military action that is designed to hold together the two wings of the country, separated by a thousand miles of India, has confirmed the ideological and emotional break.

East Bengal can only be kept in Pakistan by the heavy hand of the army. And the army is dominated by the Punjabis, who traditionally despise and dislike the Bengalis.

The break is so complete today that few Bengalis will willingly be seen in the company of a West Pakistani. I had a distressing experience of this kind during my visit to Dacca when I went to visit an old friend. "I'm sorry," he told me as he turned away, "things have changed. The Pakistan that you and I knew has ceased to exist. Let us put it behind us."

Hours later a Punjabi army officer, talking about the massacre of the non Bengalis before the army moved in, told me: "They have treated us more brutally than the Sikhs did in the partition riots in 1947. How can we ever forgive or forget this?"

### Annihilation of Hindus

The bone-crushing military operation has two distinctive features. One is what the authorities like to call the "cleansing process;" a euphemism for massacre. The other is the "rehabilitation effort."

This is a way of describing the moves to turn East Bengal into a docile colony of West Pakistan. These commonly used expressions and the repeated official references to "miscreants" and "infiltrators" are part of the charade which is being enacted for the benefit of the world. Strip away the propaganda, and the reality is colonisation -- and killing.

The justification for the annihilation of the Hindus was paraphrased by Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan, the Military Governor of East Pakistan, in a radio broadcast I heard on April 18. He said: "The Muslims of East Pakistan, who had played a leading part in the creation of Pakistan, are determined to keep it alive. However, the voice of the vast majority had been suppressed through coercion, threats to life and property by a vocal, violent and aggressive minority, which forced the Awami League to adopt the destructive course."

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Politicians' lesson from Mandela

Nelson Mandela, one of the world's most respectable personalities, died on December 5, 2013 at the age of 95 putting an end to his long mission to serve humanity. People from all over the world are paying tributes to this anti-apartheid leader who brought black and while South Africans together without fighting and established tolerance and democracy in his country. People in politics around the world have so many things to learn from the life and struggle of Nelson Mandela.

Professor M Zahidul Haque  
SAU, Dhaka

## A formula to resolve present crisis

As a Bangladeshi, I'm shocked, anxious and angry with the current situation in the country. We, the people of Bangladesh didn't give mandate to any political party to fulfil their own desire. I personally believe that a foreigner cannot resolve this kind of issues because they don't know about our culture and mentality. I believe we can resolve this issue among ourselves. Here I am proposing a possible pathway to resolve the current crisis.

(a)PM should hand over her power to deputy speaker. (b) Cabinet should be formed with six members each from 14-party and 18-party allies, two from JP and one from independent/other. Since the members will be from elected parliamentarians, party will have the sole right to select their own members. (c) Form a committee consisting of the following members: (1) Dr. Akber Ali Khan, (2) Dr. Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, (3) Dr. Wahiduddin Mahmud, (4) Barrister Rafiqul Islam, (5) ABM Musa, (6) Dr. Shahdin Malik, (7) Dr. Badiul Alam Majumder.

The committee should decide the portfolios of the cabinet members. After each meeting, the committee must disclose its outcomes in details to the media.

Dr. Anwar Hossain  
Science Researcher  
USA

## Comments on news report, "Stay stops Mollah execution," published on December 11, 2013

### Shahin Huq

He had not been given the death sentence in the actual verdict. The government changed the law to facilitate his death sentence. Such change of law after verdict is unprecedented in human history.

### Che Guevara

Absolutely correct!

### Aasfisarwar

Some media reported that UN has intervened and consequently a stay order is issued. It is also reported that they criticised the whole tribunal as faulty and substandard. Whatever is the reason for stay order, one thing is clear that government, police and justice department have become one entity so that dissidents find no refuge unless the UN intervenes.

### Truthprevails53

AL's bowing down to Jamaat is an ominous sign.

### Che Guevara

It is simply a natural process when the system is weak, corrupt and full of conspiracy. It is a shame really!

### Harun Rashid

The V signs seem to me a part of a deep-rooted conspiracy. Nation doesn't want to see this symbol again and again from the war criminals or their relatives especially in the month of victory.

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## "AL, BNP talk finally" (December 11, 2013)

### Abul Hashem

We should pray to Almighty Allah to help these two parties come to an amicable settlement to end the present political deadlock. We know these two parties do not think about people. Both parties are engaged in dirty power game and they can do anything and everything to win the game.

### Fakhrul Islam

After Taranco is gone, everything will revert.

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## "'Who will protect us?' asks his wife" (December 11, 2013)

### Truthprevails53

These Jamaat-Shibir are monsters! It is high time we exterminated them.

### Mohammed Ismail

Our state should have protected you. State is liable to protect every citizen of the country. But the present state only protects AL leaders.

### Abul Hashem

We know it is government's responsibility to protect public from all kinds of sufferings and tortures. But what we see is every government failed to do so. We condemn the killing of the witness and our sympathy is with the bereaved family. Now the question is, who will protect the witnesses? Jamaat-Shibir are hyenas in the form of human being. We have to be very careful about these elements.

### MH Khan

Thank God, Hasina is protected!