

**National and International Issues
My Perception
Volume-II**

Shah Abdul Hannan

Preface of the Writer

My new book “National and International Issues: My Perception (Volume-II)” is a collection of editorials published in The Daily Asia Post in different times. Earlier, in May 2008 a new book named “National and International Issues: My Perception” was released in the Internet in the following location:

http://www.sonarbangladesh.com/sahannan/National_Interantional_Issues_SA_Hannan.pdf.

This is the second volume of the editorials. About 500 editorials I wrote in the recent past in that newspaper.

The major items in this volume are related to national (Bangladesh) and international issues, politics, social issues, women, religion etc. I tried to analyze the current national and international issues and pointed out the problem and prospect of the related issues. I think these issues are relevant and I tried to analyze these in an objective and fair way. I hope this book will help sincere people to in evaluating many issues.

I am thankful to Poet Omar Bissas for planning of the book and my student Dalia Satter for releasing it in the website.

I hope the book “National and International Issues: My Perception (volume -II)” will be helpful to the readers. The readers may send me their comment, if there is any mistake. I think that the readers will be benefited from this book. I pray to Allah (SWT) to accept my humble contribution for the good of Islam, Ummah and the humanity.

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National

- The Nation Should Be Magnanimous # 5
- A Belated Murder Case After 36 years # 6
- A Final Solution Of Rohingya Problem Is Needed # 7
- Foreign Secretaries Meet: We Expect Practical Steps # 8
- Is Cancellation Of Election Constitutional? # 9
- Palassey Day Is Being Observed Today # 10
- Why This Insistance On City And Municipal Polls? Is It Not Creating Unnecessary Problem? # 11
- Why This Issue Now # 12

International

- Carter's Gaza Mission: We Wish Success # 13
- Election In Nepal: We Hope Maoists Will Be Responsible # 14
- Explosion of Discourse And Imagery Blaming Islam # 15
- Lal Masjid Crisis_In Pakistan # 16
- India –US Nuclear Deal : What Is The Need At All? # 17
- Indian Accusation Unacceptable # 18
- Indian Nuclear Pact With US: Suspicion Will Increase # 19
- Indian PM Says Kashmir Is Key To Indo-Pak Peace # 20
- Indo-US nuke deal Undesireable # 21
- Knighthood of Salman Ruhshdie: A Bad British Decision # 22
- Only Us Congress Can Stop Attack On Iran # 23
- Paris Comes to Dhaka # 24
- Recognition Of Kosova Independence: Why This Delay? # 25
- Remarks of Indian Presidential candidate # 26
- Somalia Situation Deserves UN attention # 27
- Threats To Attack Pakistani Targets # 28
- Train Blast In India # 29
- Turkish democracy Under New Challenge: Ultra-Secularists Trying To Derail Democracy # 30
- Turkish Election Results # 32
- US Bombarbment of Somali Town # 33
- US Meddling Is The Cause Of Palestinian Crisis # 34
- War Talk of French Prime Minister # 35
- What Is New About Condy's Statement # 36

Politics

- A Motivated Campaign Against Jamaat-e-Islami # 37
- Bangladesh Political Situation Has Become Complicated : Review Is Needed # 38
- Khaleda Zia Clarifies Her Political Position # 40
- New Political Situation # 41
- No Time For Further Political Move # 42
- Please Do Not Open New Front # 43
- Recent Judgment And Political Parleys # 44
- The Un Statement On Bangladesh Political Situation # 45
- Unwarranted Political Programme Of Grand Alliance # 46

Law

A New Phase In Independence of Judiciary # 47
Bail Petition And Emergency Power Rules # 49

Economics

Banks Should Give More Finance To Rural businesses and Farmers # 50
BB Governor Speaks about Islamic Banking Guideline # 51
Corporatisation Of Govt Owned Banks # 52
Islamic Development Bank President's Visit # 53
Minimum Profits For Businesses In the Present Time # 54
Reform World Bank And IMF # 55
Role of Micro-credit Providers: Some Questions # 56
Slowdown in World economy : Special Program Needed # 57

Education

College Seats For Admission Of Students. Is There Any Problem? # 58
President Speaks About Bad Student and Teacher Politics # 59
Science Education: Decline in Number Of Students Should Be Investigated # 60
Teacher Should Be-Non-Partisan # 61

Social Aspect/Women

Children Languishing In Jails # 62
Drug Problem: Coordinated Program Needed To Control It # 63
Health Rights Should Be Ensured # 64
New ideas Necessary For Protecting Women against Repression # 65
Night shelters for street women and children # 67
Policy for Orphaned Children of SIDR Cyclone # 68
Revival And Improvement Of Public Health Care System # 69
Rights Of Indigenous People # 70
River Erosion Problem: Bangladesh Requires An Agency for Handling This Yearly Issue # 71
Social Movement Against Smoking Needed # 72
Solution of The Problem Of Ultra Poor # 73
Student Protesting Sister's Insult Fighting For Life : Eve-Teasing Must Stop # 75
Violations Of Human Rights Should Stop # 76
Violence Against Women In Workplaces : How To Deal ? # 77
Women And girls must be protected # 78
Women Development Policy Without Violating Quranic Laws: A Right Demand # 79

Others

Muslim News Coverage Negative: Irresponsible Media Role # 80
Nazrul Researcher Shahabuddin Ahmad Passes Away # 81
Secularism Gone Amuck: World Should Protest Denial Of Religious Right # 82

NATIONAL

The Nation Should Be Magnanimous

Demonstrators continued in some parts of Dhaka, Chittagong and three other districts against publication of the cartoon on the Prophet Muhammad (sm) in the Alpin of Prothom Alo. The clash broke out in Dhaka at around 2:20 pm when a group of activists, apparently belonging to Hijbut Tahrir Bangladesh, tried to cross the barbed-wire barricade near police control room at Shahbagh crossing.

The government has banned the weekly magazine and the newspaper authorities offered unqualified public apology three times so far for the cartoon, which, they said, was published inadvertently. The cartoonist was sent to jail. The newspaper authorities repeated its apology at a meeting with a group of senior Alims and a section of Islamic leaders on Thursday. Following the meeting, major politico-religious groups postponed their planned agitation on Friday. But some other groups went on with their agitation and brought out processions, defying the ban on demonstrations under the state of emergency. Witnesses said. Islamic Constitution Movement, Hijbut Tahrir Bangladesh, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, Islamic Oikya Andolon, Islami Chhatra Andolan and Islami Chhatara Majlish staged the demonstrations.

We feel that stand taken by the senior religious leaders including Khatib (Juma Prayer speaker) of Baitul Mukarram is the right policy. The editor has asked for unconditional apology and there is no justification to continue the agitation. The senior Islamic leaders have highlighted the example of forgiveness of the Prophet for one who repents which we should follow. Excess is never appreciated in Islam. We have also seen the authorities have taken necessary legal action against the cartoonist and Alpin. We urge all to exercise good sense.

23.09.2007.

A Belated Murder Case After 36 years

A new case has been filed by against Some Jammate-e-Islami leaders including its President and secretary general after 36 years of the alleged incident the press has reported. Mozaffar Ahmad Khan, Dhaka district unit Muktijoddha commander, filed the murder case, stating that the Jamaat men killed his nephew Osman Gani and fellow freedom fighter Golam Mostafa alias Tukub Ali on November 25 in 1971. Meantime, another Dhaka court will give order today on whether to approve of registering a sedition case against Mojaheed, Abdul Quader Mollah and Shah Abdul Hannan, former secretary of the government of Bangladesh as a regular one.

Recording the statement of Mozaffar Ahmad Khan, Judicial Magistrate Ashiqul Khabir directed officer-in-charge at Keraniganj Police Station to register the double murder as a first information report. The court also asked the OC to take action against the accused after investigation into the matter.

Mozaffar showed eight people, including himself and the victims' parents, as witnesses in the case. The case was filed under sections 447/448/436/302/109/114 of the Bangladesh Penal Code. Complainant Mozaffar said sixty to seventy other unknown activists of the three militias took part in killing, torching and looting valuables in Keraniganj on the day. He mentioned that the accused formed collaborating forces like Razakar, al-Badr and al-Shams during the liberation war with a view to exterminating the Bangali nation.

The secretary general of Jammate islami has termed the case as politically motivated and compared with a fairy story and said they will fight the case in the court of law and also politically

We also do not understand why a murder case has been launched after 36 years of occurrence. This is inexplicable. A murder case could be filed in 1972 or as soon as possible. The delay is indeed appears to be not very plausible and smacks of motive.

18.12.2007

A Final Solution Of Rohingya Problem Is Needed

UNB Has reported that Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury has said this government will address the problem of Rohingya refugees in earnest with a view to resolving the crisis. The foreign adviser said this while he was speaking to the media following a meeting with Pia Prytz Phiri, representative of the UN High Commission for Refugees. "We discussed how bilaterally the UNHR can work together with the government to meet these concerns," Pia Phiri observed while speaking to the media.

We feel that it is necessary to solve this long standing problem of Rohingya refugees finally. This issue is continuing since the later part of nineteen seventies, for the last 30 years. The domestic situation in Myanmar has forced these refugees to Bangladesh, a few times they came in floods and in other times they came in trickles. The lasting solution is restoration of democracy and human rights in Myanmar. The leader of the opposition, who is also a noble laureate, is in house arrest for the last 15 years. Without restoration of democracy the problems of minorities in Myanmar can not be solved as their history has shown. The UN and major powers should try to solve the problem seriously. Bangladesh as a neighbor can offer a helping hand in this regard.

17.04.2007

Foreign Secretaries Meet: We Expect Practical Steps

Foreign secretaries of India and Bangladesh will meet in Delhi on 17th of this month. News papers have reported that India will seek transit facility and greater cooperation in bilateral security from Bangladesh at the foreign secretary level bilateral talks .Bangladesh on the other hand will raise unresolved bilateral issues such as demarcation and sharing of water of common rivers and demarcation of maritime borders between the two countries. "We have discussed transit in different forums. We are interested in transit and will remain interested," said Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty following his meeting with Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury at his office yesterday. Criticizing the politicization of the transit issue, the Indian envoy told journalists, "It's an economic issue, not political at all. Look at the rest of the world. I don't understand why this is being made a political issue in Bangladesh." India's transit access through Bangladesh has been a sensitive issue in Bangladesh and India has been demanding the facility for long for a more economically viable access to its seven northeastern states, also known as the Seven Sisters.

Pinak said India and Bangladesh have some pending issues, but cooperation in bilateral security is one of the primary concerns. "There are elements in both the countries who have caused certain security breaches and there have been bomb blasts," he said adding, "Connectivity [was] found between organizations here and there. So, we will be seeking greater cooperation on security issues so that both the countries can fight the menace of terrorism together." Asked whether he has raised the issue of repatriating Anu Chetia to the Bangladesh foreign adviser, Pinak said, "We repatriated some Bangladeshi wanted people hiding in Kolkata. We also need to get some people back from Bangladesh." "The name you mentioned has been there. But there are more names what we have given to Bangladesh government and expect that Bangladesh will catch them and hand them over to us," he added. In response to the same question, Iftekhar told The Daily Star that he had no discussion over the Chetia issue with the Indian high commissioner.

"Pending issues like sharing of water and fixing river borders will be raised at the talks which will initiate talks over the important issue of maritime demarcation," he said adding that the issue of cooperation in bilateral security would also be discussed at the talks. While putting the emphasis on resolving the issues, the Indian envoy said, "We will also focus on bus and train services as to how to improve the services and increase frequency."

India and Bangladesh are neighbors and there is no escape that we must have good-neighborly relations. In the past relations have not been always good. India's attitude to different regime is different .This should not be. Bangladesh should not be judged by which regime is there in Bangladesh. India should not be biased to any special party.

Transit is no doubt a touchy issue now because of India' failure in the past to consider Bangladesh transit to Nepal and Bhutan which are true transit issue, not like corridor type transit issue. We feel this issue will require time to solve and it should be resolved by the people's elected government. A package proposal is better, one package for all the transit issues together of the two countries, another package for all the water resource issues. As regards Anup Chetia, the issue is different from the issue of common criminals, this should be looked into in a different frame work. In any event we wish progress in the talk.

Is Cancellation Of Election Constitutional?

News paper report suggests that the care-taker government has decided to cancel the scheduled 22 nd January election instead of suspension of the election. It has been sent to the President for approval. We are pretty sure that the President will sign it. In the present circumstances he has no real say.

The question is will it be constitutional? We have no doubt in mind that it will be another unconstitutional act of the present government. The constitution has not been suspended and despite its several violations it is still in force. The constitution does not provide that the government or the President can cancel an election. It is only election commission which can postpone it if for reasons beyond its control it can not hold the election.

This act is apparently to please Awami League so that re-election also takes place in those 17 seats where the candidates have been elected unopposed. It is a reward to agitational politics of Awami league alliance and punishment to law-abiding other political forces, at least in the current phase of our history where the 4 party alliance did not do any agitational activities.

We feel that before taking this unconstitutional decision the government should have referred this matter also to the Supreme Court for guidance. It would have mitigated the situation partly.

20.01.2007

Palassey Day Is Being Observed Today

Today is historic Palassey Day. On this day in 1757, the rule of Sirajuddowla, the Nawab or ruler of the then Bengal (comprising of the present provinces of Assam, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and the independent Bangladesh) came to an end in the battle of Plassey, a place about 200 miles north-west of Dhaka, in the present Indian West Bengal. This was the beginning of the British conquest of the Sub-continent.

The immediate cause of the defeat of the Nawab was the betrayal of his Army Chief Mir Zafar Ali Khan and some other generals. As such it was an walk over for the British East Indian Company. It appears strange to-day, how could a British business company arm itself, build an army, could fight against the government. The British government neglected its duty to contain this company and allowed this company to take over most part of the then India and finally the British government directly took the rein.

The democrats of Europe were pursuing colonialism and imperialism to loot resources of other countries. This is a strange lesson of history. We in Bangladesh observe this day as a reminder of foreign conspiracy, local betrayals and occupation by western powers for flimsy reasons.

24.06.2007

Why This Insistance On City And Municipal Polls? Is It Not Creating Unnecessary Problem?

The Election Commission (EC) has decided to announce on Friday the schedule for holding polls in four city corporations and nine municipalities by the end of July, which will be the first elections under the state of emergency. Meanwhile, the caretaker government is yet to decide whether the state of emergency would be relaxed or lifted to create a congenial atmosphere for credible elections, allowing polls campaigns without any restrictions. Schedule for the long overdue polls in the city corporations of Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet and nine municipalities will be announced at a press conference on Friday. Talking to reporters at his office yesterday, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hussain said schedule for polls in Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) would be announced after the voter list for the DCC areas is finalised. According to the EC plans, polls in the DCC and some other municipalities will be held in September, and upazila elections in October and the ninth parliamentary election in the third week of December. Polls in 482 upazila parishads will however be held in phases.

We have seen that almost all the major parties including BNP, Awami League and Jamaate Islami have asked the government and the election commission to hold the national election first. It is the constitutional mandate of the caretaker government but they are back-tracking on this and thinking of local elections before that. It will just to create unnecessary political problem. The election commission is not under the government in this regard. They could easily say that they will hold local election after national election. They also know that at the present time when the caretaker government is ruling, it the constitutional mandate to hold national election first and it is also their obligation to follow the spirit of the constitution. They can say that they are unable to do anything about it. But it seems that they are very vigorously interested to hold such elections against the will of the major parties and people. We request the government and the election commission not to pursue such course.

18.06.2008.

Why This Issue Now

News papers have reported that in a discussion meeting of Amar Sadhanar Desh, speakers have said that immunity to the war criminals after independence of Bangladesh has given birth to unlimited crimes that ultimately resulted in degradation of values, corruption and injustice in the society.

The war criminals must be brought to justice for building a prosperous Bangladesh free of fanaticism and social disparity, they said at a discussion on 'Recalling the Memories of Liberation War and Expectation from the Present Government'. The culture of looting spread out and trend of human rights violation went up unabated and the people lost their trust in justice and truth, as the genocide, rape and other forms of repression in 1971 have not been dealt with properly, said a speaker.

The committee identified 287 Pakistani war criminals including 191 'high level' criminals and 30 to 40 'top criminals' among who are Pakistani generals Yahiya Khan, Tikka Khan, Rao Farman Ali. Late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto could also be tried as the main instigator of the genocide, said the report.

There is an obligation on the part of Bangladesh to try the war criminals, as it signed different international conventions, he said, adding that Bangladesh itself has to initiate the trial procedure. On December 16 of 1971, the 93,000 members of the Pakistani army surrendered to the joint forces of India and Bangladesh, but the anti-liberation political forces and the Bangali collaborators did not officially surrender, said Maj Gen (rtd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim, chairman of Bangladesh Amar Sadhanar Desh. Stressing the formation of a probe committee to identify all the war criminals and try them, he said, "We must start the task immediately, so that all the fourteen crore people of the country can proceed to the path of prosperity." "We should observe a 'hatred day' to show our abhorrence of the war criminals," said Nurul Amin.

We are at a loss why this demand has been raised at this time when an unelected government is in office and the main issue before the nation is holding election. The Pakistani prisoners have been released under an agreement between Pakistan and India known as Simla agreement. The then President of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave general amnesty to all except who were murderers and rapists, political difference was forgiven. There is no scope now for war-crime trials in the above circumstances.

It is not at all clear to us how events of war of independence days are responsible for degradation of values, corruption and injustice in the society now, as has been alleged. Is it a ploy to hide the offence of the corrupt and offenders of the present time?

22.3.2007.

INTERNATIONAL

Carter's Gaza Mission: We Wish Success

Former US President Jimmy Carter and Hamas leaders discussed the possibility of a truce in the Gaza Strip during their talks in Cairo, a leader of the Islamist group said on Friday. Carter, who was due to meet exiled Hamas chief Khaled Meshaal in Damascus on Friday, also raised the issue of an Israeli soldier seized in 2006 just outside the Palestinian territory, said Mahmud Zahar, who took part in Thursday's meeting in Cairo. "We had common points of view and the talks will continue today during the meeting with the political leadership of Hamas in Damascus," Zahar said in a telephone interview. "President Carter talked of humanitarian proposals linked to the truce," he said in reference to attempts to halt the bloodshed in Gaza, where 18 Palestinians and three Israeli soldiers were killed in the latest explosion of violence on Wednesday. The discussions also cantered on a crippling embargo against Gaza which Israel imposed in retaliation for rocket and mortar fire from the territory. During the four-hour meeting, Carter also asked about Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier seized by Palestinian militants in a cross-border raid from Gaza in 2006 claimed by Hamas and two other armed groups, Zahar said. "We promised to give an answer after we complete internal consultations," Zahar said. Carter's talks with Hamas have angered officials in the United States and Israel, where the Islamist movement that controls Gaza is considered a terrorist organization. The Hamas delegation also met Egyptian officials, including intelligence chief Omar Suleiman, to discuss a possible truce with Israel and a reopening of border crossings.

We wish success of Carter Mission. Mr. Carter has earned a great name for his moral position on international issues. He has negotiated so many other peace deals. We hope Mr. Carter knows all the angles and complexities involving Palestine, being a former President of US. He can convince Hamas on any good way out, he may find more difficulty with Israelis who are very unbending type regarding just causes of Palestinians. We are eagerly waiting for the cot come.

19.04.2008.

Election In Nepal: We Hope Maoists Will Be Responsible

News agencies have reported from Nepal that Nepal's Maoists said Tuesday the abolition of the Himalayan nation's monarchy was now just a 'matter of procedure' as they held a commanding lead in the count from last week's landmark elections. They are expected to win absolute majority though full result is not yet out. A total 208 seats have already been allocated, with the Maoists taking 114. Their nearest rival, the centrist Nepali Congress, has won 32 seats, the election commission said

'The monarchy is finished. There should be no doubt about that, it's just a matter of procedure,' senior Maoist official Prababkher, who uses one name, said. He predicted that when the new assembly convenes, it will waste little time in declaring a republic. 'We may not declare a republic on the first day of the first constituent assembly meeting. Declaring a republic may take a few days, but there is no doubt it will happen,' said the Maoist official, a senior party member with a seat in the new body. The April 10 elections were a central plank of a 2006 peace deal under which the Maoists agreed to end their decade-long insurgency – which left at least 13,000 people dead – and enter mainstream politics. Although other mainstream parties had agreed with the Maoists to sack the unpopular King Gyanendra, some politicians have been arguing that Nepal should keep some kind of monarch as a symbol of the neutrality of the country sandwiched between Asian giants China and India. The United States – who list the Maoists as a terrorist organisation – welcomed the polls in a statement received Tuesday. Despite pre-election violence and some instances of Election Day malpractice 'Nepali voters were able to cast their ballots peacefully in most districts,' State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said in the statement.

We hope that the Maoists who have done so well in the election against pre-poll predictions will act responsibly. Now they have accepted democracy and constitutional rule in place of proletariat dictatorship they have to convince the people and the world that they are true to their word. They have to discipline their armed units and disband them and integrate them in fruitful occupation. The arms have to be fully recovered. We will be eagerly watch the Nepalese politics and society, how they develop in future.

17.04.2008

Explosion of Discourse And Imagery Blaming Islam

In the Guardian daily of London on 7th July, Soumaya Ghannoushi has written “pick up any newspaper today in Britain or elsewhere in Europe, switch on the TV or tune in to any radio station, and you're very likely to get the impression that "our societies" - if not western civilization in its entirety - face an imminent Islamic threat, on a par with the old dangers of fascism. Since the terrorist bombings of New York, Madrid and London, the "fundamentalist peril" has become part of the air we breathe. It has become a rhetorical crutch for everyone from rightwing bigots to opportunistic politicians and repenting "former extremists", each with their own agenda. Today we live amid an explosion of discourse and imagery around Islam and Muslims. Sparked by al-Qaida's lunatic atrocities, it has since fed on the politics of fear and suspicion. The victims have included objectivity, balance, and the ability to judge issues calmly and rationally. Flawed material is endlessly reproduced and recycled, so it is little wonder that the public's understanding of Islam and the complex political problems of the Muslim world are limited at best. Years of peddled fear and deionization have had severe consequences: a widening of ignorance and bigotry, deepening mistrust between individuals and communities, and the resurrection of the pernicious language of racism and fanaticism - as journalist Peter Osborne illustrated in his Channel 4 Dispatches documentary earlier this week. It is probably no exaggeration to say that Islam is now the religion closest to Europe and remotest from it. Islam is no longer an alien, distant religion. It is now woven into the very fabric of European society. Muslims are the largest of the continent's minorities. Yet their physical proximity does not appear to have made them more familiar or better understood. If anything, to most European eyes they seem stranger, more distant, more ambiguous than ever. The much hyped Islamic threat is one of the greatest lies of our time. The "Muslim world" The security risks posed by al-Qaida, moreover, face Muslims and non-Muslims alike. After all, al-Qaida has perpetrated more atrocities in Muslim countries than western capitals. Attacks in Casablanca, Bali, Riyadh, Algiers, Tunisia, Istanbul and Iraq have outnumbered those in New York, Madrid and London. Political expediency and scaremongering has seen the propagation of the idea of a grave Islamist threat to the status of orthodoxy. But however easy it might be to surrender to this fiction, it remains just that: a myth fabricated by a few, exploited by a few, and consumed by many. No matter how widely circulated, or endlessly regurgitated, a myth remains a myth. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/jul/11/islam>)

We feel that Soumaya ghannoushi's article deserves serious attention. Over-use of so-called threat is not benefiting any body except creating more tension, rise of Islam phobia and serious affect on the rights of the Muslims in many parts of the world. It is time that terrorism is not identified with religion but with political, social, economic and foreign policy issues and issues of domination by some powers known to all. We feel happy that King Abdullah is trying to pursue the discourse of dialog most seriously and another major conference will be held in Madrid where he will be himself participating. The way forward is dialog and co-operation rather than hatred, confrontation and blame game.

13.07.2008

Lal Masjid Crisis In Pakistan

News agencies have reported that Pakistan's government Sunday moved closer to a full-scale assault on militants barricaded in an Islamabad mosque, after a senior army commando was shot dead in fierce clashes. The military said colonel Haroon Islam died after an operation to blast through part of the wall surrounding the fortified Red Mosque complex in a bid to free women and children allegedly being used as human shields. Officials said the government was under pressure to end the six-day siege which has killed at least 24 people, as initial plaudits for its tough stance turned to questions about how long the standoff could be allowed to last.

'Intelligence reports indicate the longer the siege goes on the greater the threat posed by the hardliners loyal to the Red Mosque in other parts of the country,' the top official said. Pakistani forces have held back from raiding the now bullet-pocked mosque but moved in closer early Sunday, when the giant blasts to knock down the wall echoed around the city. 'There are fears that the militants may start killing women and children inside and then blame it on the government. They know they have no escape route,' a government official said.

When the editorial will be published the final stage in the operations may have been already enacted. We are pained at what has happened and what may happen in this matter in the coming hours and days. We are grieved at the loss of life including those of young girl students and soldiers. We agree that Lal Masjid and Jamia Hafsa issue is a complicated matter. No body can support taking law into one's own hand, obtaining illegal weapon, defying administration and threatening suicide attacks. The students are not responsible but the leader of the movement Moulana Abdul Aziz has of course harmed the good name of Islam. In modern time he has adopted wrong tactics. Even the Prophet(sm) in Macca did not take up arms or destroyed idols in Kabah. He prayed in Kabah though idols were inside. This shows the need for lawful and practical methods and tactics. A few extremists and over - zealous persons are harming the cause of Islam in many places.

Moulana Abdul Aziz and his helpers and the Government of Pakistan are responsible for the deaths of girls and other students. It is very difficult to understand why the government allowed the matter to come this far in the centre of the capital of Pakistan. Nobody can be sure about the intentions of Moulana Aziz group or the government, both parties tried to make some political or propaganda gain.

This incident now will be used by anti-Islamic elements against Islam that Islam teaches extremism which is in reality not true. It is our duty to remain cool, face the fall-out of the event with wisdom and uproot the terrorists and extremists from our midst.

10.07.2007

India –US Nuclear Deal : What Is The Need At All?

Press reports say that the United States has once again reminded India that time is running out for the Indo-US nuclear deal, saying everyday that is delayed makes the pact much more difficult to be implemented. "We are talking to them (India) about it (deal), in as much as they are briefing us on their efforts. I think it's more they're coming to us to say," State Department spokesman McCormack told reporters.

"This is what we're trying to do to resolve internal political differences that are holding up the deal moving forward."

The spokesman was asked whether Washington was in touch with New Delhi on the nuclear deal and if there is still time on the US side to get the deal done in 2008. McCormack said that a separate branch of government as well as other international Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and IAEA will be dealing with the deal.

Meanwhile, Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee yesterday met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and briefed him about the situation arising out of the government's standoff with Left parties on the Indo-US nuclear issue. During the 40-minute meeting with the Prime Minister, Mukherjee, who is also the government's chief negotiator on the nuclear deal, is understood to have apprised Singh about the deliberations he and Defence Minister A K Antony had with leaders of the Left and UPA allies in the last few days.

Mukherjee last night said, "there is no improvement or deterioration (in the situation). It is a standstill." UPA allies like RJD, DMK and LJP, who were firmly backing the government on the deal, have said that the agreement was in the interest of the nation. The allies have, however, said the government should take in due consideration the viewpoints of Left in the matter. The Left parties have already made it clear that they will vote against the government if it moves ahead with the pact.

We are apprehensive of this agreement. We do not find any justification for such a deal. Why India should have such a deal which may increase tension in the region, create suspicion among the neighbors of India. ? It may even generate an arms race in the region. The left parties in India in this respect have taken a proper policy not to trust any imperialist power in such matter and maintain its own independent policy. We wish Indian government carefully reviews the matter.

22.06.2008

Indian Accusation Unacceptable

Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftexhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday rejected the Indian claims of a Bangladeshi link with Saturday's twin bomb blasts in the Indian city of Hyderabad, describing them as 'baseless'. "The allegations are baseless, I reject them," he told journalists at the foreign ministry on allegations made by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy earlier yesterday. Reddy in Hyderabad alleged that "all available information point towards the terrorist groups of Pakistan and Bangladesh". He said the Bangladesh government would never retreat from protecting the country's interests in the face of any wrongful allegations, adding, however, that he would examine these particular allegations. Earlier, the adviser condemned the attacks in a letter to Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee. Yesterday the Andhra Pradesh chief minister also went so far as to point to so called terrorist organisations in Bangladesh and Pakistan for the explosion that had ripped through Hyderabad's Mecca Masjid last May he said.

We condemned the bomb attacks in Hyderabad in India only yesterday. We are surprised at this allegation against Bangladesh, particularly when the inquiry is at its early stage. There are more militant organizations in North-east and central India than Bangladesh. Instead of looking at its own house it is blaming Bangladesh without any reason. We agree with the foreign office and request them to lodge an official protest.

28.08.2007

Indian Nuclear Pact With US: Suspicion Will Increase

Reports from Delhi says that over the nuclear issue the left coalition partners of the Congress led government of India have decided to leave the coalition because of differences over policy on this issue. Top leaders of CPI(M), CPI, Forward Bloc and RSP met President Pratibha Patil here in the afternoon and submitted separate formal letters on behalf of their parties ending their support. In a joint but separate letter, the Left parties, which have 59 members in the 543-strong Lok Sabha, also asked Patil to "direct the Prime Minister to seek a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha immediately."

Addressing a press conference soon after meeting the President, CPI(M) General Secretary Prakash Karat said the government was in a minority and accused it of disregarding the majority opinion in Parliament against the nuclear deal. "The majority in Parliament has clearly expressed that this deal should not be proceeded with", he said. Karat also charged the government and Congress leadership with "always looking up to the US" and said the government has not been transparent on the nuclear deal at any stage and demanded that the text of the India-specific safeguards agreement draft, to be finalised with the IAEA, be made public. The Marxist leader accused the government of hiding the draft safeguards agreement from the people. "This text has to be made public and scientists and the people should have access to it", he said and pointed out that the United States itself has put on the internet an additional protocol it wants to sign with the IAEA. He said Congress was "determined to go ahead with a further right-wing shift in both foreign and domestic policies, thus providing a fertile ground for the communal forces". The withdrawal of support by Left allies sets the stage for a trial of strength between the government and the opposition in Lok Sabha. A brief session of Parliament is likely on July 21 or July 22 for a show of strength, after which the government would decide to approach the IAEA for signing the safeguards agreement, a step needed for operationalising the civil nuclear deal with the US as it would allow international inspections of New Delhi's civilian nuclear reactors. India also has to secure a waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers Group to join international nuclear commerce before the civil nuclear pact, first signed by the Indian Prime Minister and American President George W Bush in July 2005, is voted by the US Congress.

We have seen in the meantime G-8 group meeting in Japan has endorsed the treaty where Monmohon Singh also went to discuss the issue with Mr. Bush. The support is natural because most of the time this group follows the US. We do not know why India requires this treaty. India is a nuclear power, it can pursue its further peaceful nuclear program for energy need itself. Even the Indian left parties do not like this program and feels that it will increase super power interference there. The neighbors are of course worried because they do not want further upgradation of their nuclear weapon system through a back-door. The deal will indeed bring bad consequences for the region in enhanced tension and suspicion over the intent of India.

11.07.2008

Indian PM Says Kashmir Is Key To Indo-Pak Peace

AFP has reported from Kashmir that Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said the disputed Kashmir region could become a symbol of cooperation with arch-rival Pakistan as he promised to continue peace talks with Islamabad. Singh, on a day-long visit to Kashmir's Jammu region, repeated a pledge he first made in 2005 that "borders in Kashmir cannot be changed, but they can be made irrelevant." "I hope and believe that Kashmir can, one day, become a symbol of India-Pakistan cooperation rather than of conflict.

"There can no be question of divisions or fresh partitions, but the line of control can become a line of peace," he said, referring to the de facto border that divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan. Singh also added that New Delhi would deal firmly with an Islamic insurgency against Indian rule in its zone of Kashmir that began in 1989 and has so far claimed more than 42,000 lives, according to official figures. "We are firm in our resolve to fight terrorism and to end the blackmail of terror in this peace-loving state," he said. On the slow-moving peace talks with Pakistan on Kashmir and other disputes, started in January 2004, Singh said New Delhi would "continue our dialogue with Pakistan, despite difficulties ... because I genuinely believe that there is no alternative but to work for building peace." "I reiterate that I am for ending a 60-year old legacy of bitterness with Pakistan," he added.

We welcome the statement of the Indian Prime Minister. Indeed Kashmir is the key issue between India and Pakistan. The solution of this problem is urgent as both the countries have nuclear weapons.

We believe part of the speech is rhetorical. Any solution demands that discussion must be without pre-conditions. The most important elements for consideration are the wishes of the people of Kashmiris, the UN resolutions in this regard which both the countries accepted but remain un-implemented, the Simla accord and also the genuine security interests of both countries. We urge both countries to make concessions for the sake of peace.

17.07.2007

Indo-US nuke deal Undesireable

AFP has reported that Pakistan has warned that a civilian nuclear accord between India and the United States threatens regional stability, saying it would allow its arch rival to produce more atomic bombs. The caution came at a meeting of Pakistan's National Command Authority (NCA) chaired by President Pervez Musharraf, a statement said. The body oversees the country's nuclear strategy. The long-delayed deal announced in July in Washington allows US exports of civilian nuclear fuel and technology to India for the first time in 30 years. "The NCA noted that the US-India nuclear agreement would have implications on strategic stability as it would enable India to produce significant quantities of fissile material and nuclear weapons from unsafeguarded nuclear reactors," the statement said. "While continuing to act with responsibility in maintaining credible minimum deterrence and avoiding an arms race, Pakistan will neither be oblivious to its security requirements, nor to the needs of its economic development which demand growth in the energy sector," the statement said.

It is unfortunate that US has made this deal with India when it knows that there is serious tension in the sub-continent over the un-solved Kashmir issue and also a kind of an arms race between nuclear India and Pakistan. Even a large part of Indian opinion is also against such treaty with US. When US is making such a row over peaceful nuclear development in Iran, its deal with nuclear India shows its clearly its double standard and selfish nature of its foreign policy

04.08.2007

Knighthood of Salman Rushdie: A Bad British Decision

Her Majesty the Queen of England has bestowed on Salman Rushdie the title of Knight. We know under the constitutional system of Britain the government takes the decision and the Queen does the formality.

We fail to understand why the British government decided to give this title to Salman Rushdie who has so much hurt the feelings of the Muslims around the world. He has given the title of Mahound to our prophet Muhammad (sm), he has said the Quran contains Satanic verses, he has criticized the companions and wives of the Prophet, he has called Ayesha, the wife of the Prophet (sm) a harlot. His whole book is nothing but reflection of his nasty campaign against Islam.

In this context we fail to understand the wisdom of the decision of the British government. The generality of Muslims will take it in an extremely bad light. They will think that the most of the western powers do not care for the sentiments of the Muslims. Nothing can be done now but the British government should review its policy. This has come just after the British government has severed its contact with British Muslim Council (MCB), the federal organization of five hundred Muslim organizations there. These two events may not have any connection but questions will be raised among British Muslims.

19.06.2007.

Only Us Congress Can Stop Attack On Iran

News reports say that Pentagon has created a panel for Iran bombing. On the other Iran has said that it is prepared both for war and talks with the United States, a top foreign ministry official said yesterday, amid speculation of American plans for military action against Tehran. "We have prepared ourselves for any situation, even if war happens," Deputy Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mohammadi told the ISNA news agency "Iran is ready for negotiations without preconditions with the United States, but the Americans have not accepted it yet," he added. "We have had unofficial meetings with Americans over Afghanistan and Iraq, but they say first Iran should accept US conditions and then talks take place."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has insisted she would only hold talks with her Iranian counterpart if Tehran first agreed to a suspension of sensitive nuclear activities. Mohammadi said that if the UN Security Council adopted a second resolution imposing sanctions over Iran's nuclear programme, Tehran would press on with its nuclear work.

US Vice President Dick Cheney reignited speculation of US military intervention in Iran when he said Washington favours a diplomatic approach to Tehran's atomic programme but that "all options are still on the table." The United States and Israel accuse Iran of seeking nuclear weapons. Tehran denies the charges, insisting its atomic programme is peaceful in nature.

Despite the Bush administration's insistence it has no plans to go to war with Iran, a Pentagon panel has been created to plan a bombing attack that could be implemented within 24 hours of getting the go-ahead from President George W Bush, The New Yorker magazine reported in its latest issue. The special planning group was established within the office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in recent months, according to an unidentified former US intelligence official cited in the article by investigative reporter Seymour Hersh in the March 4 issue.

The panel initially focused on destroying Iran's nuclear facilities and on regime change but has more recently been directed to identify targets in Iran that may be involved in supplying or aiding militants in Iraq, according to an Air Force adviser and a Pentagon consultant, who were not identified. The consultant and a former senior intelligence official both said that US military and special-operations teams had crossed the border from Iraq into Iran in pursuit of Iranian operatives, according to the article.

We are appalled at the saber-rattling of the US leaders. They have been talking of action against Iran all the time. These are all against international laws but US does not care in most cases of the international law. How the US would react if others will do it. They will just start an attack in the name of international law and of course in the name of international community.

The war seems to be round the corner with colossal consequences unless US is stopped. We do not think anybody can stop US, not even the UN. Only the American Congress can do it and we urge US Congress to act rapidly for the sake of humanity.

28.2.2007.

Paris Comes to Dhaka

We have seen the press reports on the above item in several newspapers and TV channels. With the assistance of French Consular Office, a two days program was organized at Sonargaon Pan Pacific Hotel. The dresses shown there or the body exposure was not very befitting for our society. We do not use such dresses and we do not want to encourage such dresses.. Some groups wanted to organize the same type of programs in previous years at the time of previous governments but they did not succeed.

But the authorities allowed this time, we do not understand for what good reasons. This time they organized with previous advertisement in print and electronic media. We request the authorities to discourage such program. We welcome trade with France, we welcome French machineries but we do not require their dress pattern which are mostly against rules of our religion. The religions of most of us do not accept such bodily exposures of women, even of men. In this regard we have a superior culture which we should protect.

13.02.2007

Recognition Of Kosova Independence: Why This Delay?

Bangladesh has yet to decide on recognizing the independence of Kosovo, a territory in the Balkans which declared independence in February, as Dhaka waits for perceived national interest to make any such decision. 'In such cases [recognizing Kosovo], perceived national interest is always the key,' the foreign affairs adviser, Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, told newsmen on Tuesday. Iftekhar said a decision in this regard could be made soon in consultation with other Islamic countries. He, however, admitted the OIC member states were split up on the issue of Kosovo's independence, and the latest Islamic Conference of the Foreign Ministers in Uganda failed to reach a consensus on the matter. Asked why Bangladesh cannot take an independent position on Kosovo, Iftekhar said Bangladesh attaches priority to 'perceived national interest and how far we will be benefited from such a political matter.' He hoped a formal decision regarding the independence of Kosovo would soon be made. He noted while the United States and some European countries had accorded formal recognition to Kosovo, this had been strongly opposed by Russia, to a certain extent by China, and some others.

We are really surprised at the delay in recognition of the independent Kosova by Bangladesh and some other countries. Kosova has earned its independence after so many struggles and also after so much repression by Serbia. Serb governments have a very bad record of oppressing other people and ethnic groups as we have seen in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia.

We do not find any justification for delay in Bangladesh. What national interest the foreign minister to evaluate? Is it that some countries who have independent movements within their territories may not like our decision? Our national interest would be more served by our relation with Muslim countries, Europe and US apart from the need of upholding the principle of moral conduct in international relations. We urge Bangladesh and all other Muslim and justice loving countries to give immediate recognition to Kosova.

03.07.2008

Remarks of Indian Presidential candidate

News papers have reported that the Rajasthan Governor and UPA Presidential candidate Pratibha Patil on Sunday left historians and Muslim social activists astounded by her remarks that the purdah (veil) system was introduced in India to protect women from Mughal aggressors. Addressing a function marking the 467th birth anniversary of Maharana Pratap at the Nagar Parishad Auditorium in Udaipur, Ms. Patil said though Indian culture always respected women, the veil system began during the Mughal rule to "save women from Mughal invaders." Ms. Patil said: "Today we are citizens of free India. There is need to put a stop to such practices. That alone will ensure real respect for women. When women are progressing in every field, it is our duty to discontinue such practices."

Historians said the veil system was prevalent much before the Mughal invasion. "There is evidence of construction of separate 'zanana' chambers for women in the Chittaurgarh fort in the 11th century," said Varsha Joshi of the Institute of Rajasthan Studies.

Dr. Joshi said women were not allowed to take part in the coronation ceremonies of Rajput rulers, and they were mostly confined to home. "To argue that purdah started because of Mughals amounts to taking a very narrow view of history." State president of Jamat-e-Islami Hind Mohammed Salim said the opinion that women adopted the veil because of the fear of Mughal rulers reflected the distorted view of history taken by the Sangh Parivar. "It is unfortunate that Ms. Patil found the communal forces' views convincing enough to incorporate them in her address." The State secretary of the All-India Milli Council, Abdul Qayoom Akhtar, said Ms. Patil's remarks were "factually incorrect and historically untenable." "We have been listening to such comments in the false propaganda of Sangh Parivar earlier. It is surprising that Ms. Patil has chosen to agree with the Sangh's line of thinking," he said.

We do not understand why Ms. Patil, the Congress alliance candidate has made such a statement when she is due to be elected as the President of India soon. Hijab or Purdah (decent cover of Muslim ladies) is a prescription of the Quran and it is being observed in different styles and forms in all parts of the Muslim world. It has nothing to do with the Mughals as Hijab is there in Arab lands, North Africa and South-East Asia where the Mughals never went. This will also be explaining Mughal history narrowly and lumping all the Mughal rulers in the same basket.

Her comments have been extensively condemned by Indian Muslims. We feel that it is necessary for her to express her regrets and withdraw her comments otherwise she will lose the confidence of the Muslims from the first day. Congress alliance should re-think its position in this regard.

23.06.2007

Somalia Situation Deserves UN attention

Al-Jazeera has reported that Somali opposition figures, including leaders from the Islamic Courts Union, have opened a 10-day congress in Eritrea to call for the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia. About 400 delegates gathered for the meeting on Thursday, exactly a week after the end of a clan reconciliation conference in Mogadishu, the Somali capital.

Sheikh Hassan Aweys, leader of the Islamic Courts, which briefly controlled most of Somalia before being ousted by Ethiopian-backed government forces, was present at the gathering. Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, another of the movement's leaders, was also present.

Sheikh Ahmed said the meeting was "to establish a political organisation that liberates the country and ends the violence and chaotic situation". "We call upon Ethiopia to unconditionally withdraw its troops from Somalia and stop its imperialistic adventure on our territory," he said. He warned that a prolonged conflict in Somalia would eventually spill over into neighbouring countries. "We remind her [Ethiopia] that the longer the conflict goes on, the higher the risk it will engulf the whole region," he said. "The United States' foreign policy towards Somalia has been strangely confrontational. We call upon the United States to play a more positive role in the Somali conflict."

The US has backed Ethiopia's military operations in Somalia and toughened its stance towards Eritrea, Ethiopia's neighbour and long-time enemy, which Ethiopia says has been arming groups in Somalia and elsewhere in the region. The Islamic Courts had boycotted the earlier clan reconciliation conference in Mogadishu, arguing that any peace efforts should take place only after an Ethiopian withdrawal.

We feel that the UN and independent press have all forgotten the tragic Somalia issue. Somalia has faced so much suffering, first because of military take-over, then by US and Ethiopian intervention, now again by Ethiopian military intervention. US hardly plays a positive role any where unless their puppets are involved. We do not see any end to the problem but still we request the UN to take steps in this regard.

08.09.2007

Threats To Attack Pakistani Targets

Newspapers have reported comments by the US officials that the US may strike on any target in Pakistani side of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Pakistan foreign office has reacted sharply on this and warned the United States against what it characterized as “irresponsible and dangerous” calls by top American officials for unilateral military action against alleged Al Qaeda ‘safe havens’ in the country’s tribal areas. This was a reference to a string of recent comments by the US officials that in the hypothetical situation of “actionable targets” on the Pakistan side of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, the US would not rule out any options including striking such targets. Such comments disregarded “the imperative of prudence and patience” necessary for the success of a comprehensive approach required to deal with this global danger. The foreign office said that the success of the international community in fighting terrorism depends essentially on cooperation, including sharing of concrete and actionable information and intelligence.” We cannot, nor should we be expected to take indiscriminate action over a large territory without any precise information about any Al Qaeda or terrorist hideout.” Reiterating that whatever counter-terrorism action is to be taken inside Pakistan, it would be taken by the country’s own security forces, she said: “This has been and remains the basis of our cooperation with the US.” The Pakistan Foreign office spokesperson said.

We are surprised at the comments of US officials to strike another country which is clearly in violation of international law. Pakistan has done everything possible to fight terrorism. It is not always possible to root out terrorism as is the case even in large part of India, Thailand, Philippines and many other countries .If US does carry out such attacks it will be counter-productive, it will further increase anti-US feeling in the Muslim world and elsewhere. We request the present US administration not to create further tension in the world.

21.07.2007.

Train Blast In India

News agencies have reported that At least 67 people, mostly Pakistani nationals, were burnt to death when two powerful bombs went off aboard a Pakistan-bound train from India Sunday night in a suspected terror attack, which the officials said was aimed at derailing the bilateral peace process. Some 15 people were injured in the blasts that set fire to two of the 'friendship' train's coaches.

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) with attached timers exploded ripping apart the two coaches at around at 11:55pm when the train was speeding through Deewana, 80 km north of New Delhi, at 100km per hour. The bombs might have placed on the train at Old Delhi Railway Station, from where it started at 10:40pm. Bodies charred beyond recognition, mangled metal of the two coaches, burnt bangles, footwear and other littered belongings of the passengers bore mute testimony to the ghastly attack that took place a day before the visit of Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid M Kasuri for talks in New Delhi.

A senior Railway official V N Mathur said in New Delhi that two suitcases containing IEDs were recovered from the train and the track and were defused. One of those contained petrol or kerosene, he added. Indian Home Minister Shivraj Patil told reporters here that a "new type" of explosive material, essentially incendiary in nature, was used in the blast, as a result of which, two bogies of the train were charred from inside. Asked about any suspected group responsible for the terror strike, Patil said, "We have got enough inputs, but we are not going to divulge them at this moment for the sake of investigation." No names should be hastily concluded, he added.

We deplore this inhuman and barbaric attack on a civilian train. Whoever has done it are enemies of humanity. This shows that terrorism has become a most serious problem for humanity. This has become a world-wide phenomenon and this has to be fought at all fronts. It is the duty all governments, all social and moral movements and the leaders of all religions to fight it jointly.

As terrorists exploit inter-country problems, we also feel that the core problems of the sub-continent such as Kashmir, water-dispute should be solved early. We hope the present initiatives of Pakistan and India to solve Kashmir problem will be successful We hope coming SAARC conference will take special initiatives in these regards.

20.2.2007.

Turkish democracy Under New Challenge : Ultra-Secularists Trying To Derail Democracy

As reported in daily Zaman of Turkey and other media, the face-off between Turkey's executive branch and the judiciary was underlined last week by a statement from the Supreme Court of Appeals harshly criticizing the government, claiming that it was exerting systematic pressure on the judiciary at a time when it had crucial rulings to make.

The court accused the government of attempting to create a pro-executive judiciary and of undermining the Turkish Republic's founding values. The judges claimed the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) government was trying to influence the course of a closure case filed against it at the Constitutional Court. The government's counter-declaration came from Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Çiçek: "The declaration issued by the Supreme Court of Appeals Board of Chairmen lacks not only democratic legitimacy but also legal legitimacy. This is a political statement and cannot, therefore, be accepted under any circumstances."

Treasury Minister Mehmet Şimşek said, "Statements that might affect political stability are not good for the country at a time when Turkey has a high current account deficit.". The recent tension between the government and the high judiciary first surfaced when an indictment was filed with the Constitutional Court on March 14 by the chief prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Appeals on the grounds that the AK Party had become a "focal point of anti-secular activity." The prosecutor's indictment also calls for a five-year political ban on 71 people, including 33 AK Party deputies, President Abdullah Gül and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Akın Birdal, a deputy from the Democratic Society Party (DTP) and former president of the Human Rights Association of Turkey, said the judiciary has been politicized in Turkey: "In Turkey the judiciary has been taking sides. There is no doubt about that. We cannot expect a just decision from such a politicized judiciary." Birdal also said the judiciary has had a new mission since the 1990s: "Military coups are gone. Now we have judicial coups. The judiciary can tell the legislative body that it cannot make some laws and it cannot change the constitution. Those criticizing the judiciary could be prosecuted." Regarding the latest declaration of the Supreme Court of Appeals, Birdal said it showed once again that judiciary reforms are a must -- a claim that has been repeated by EU officials. Just after the top judges' declaration on May 21, a reminder of this came from the European Parliament. Ria Oomen-Ruijten, the European Parliament's rapporteur on Turkey, said at a press conference in Strasbourg, "Nowhere in Europe do top prosecutors enjoy such freedom," adding "This case is not about the independence of the judiciary." She stressed that the case raised concerns in Europe that the rule of law is "not in the place it should be" in Turkey. Another AK Party deputy, Salih Kapusuz, argues for the need of far-reaching judicial reforms. He said if reforms are not undertaken it will be impossible to talk about the principle of separation of powers in Turkey. "If judges can dictate to the Parliament about which bills can be passed, this means that the system is already flawed," he added.

It appears to us that all efforts are on to ban the AK Party in Turkey only because it is for giving Islam its proper role and freedom in society. The old-guard judiciary which was picked by earlier ultra-secular authorities are trying to stop democratic route, they think democracy is for extremist secularists or so-called Kemalists. We have never heard that a state prosecutor can file a case against the government or for banning the government party,

it is a peculiar Turkish arrangement to stifle rise of value-oriented Islamic parties. We wish the world takes note of the situation and makes effort to protect democracy with full freedom for all to pursue their politics and programme.

26.05.2008.

Turkish Election Results

Islamic-rooted AKP party has won parliamentary elections in Turkey by a wide margin. Although the ruling party's success has been touted as proof that Islam and democracy can coexist, the new government is likely to face persistent tension over the role of Islam in society because of a kind of disguised interference in national politics from the Turkish army top brasses. Anatolia news agency has projected that Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party would win 340 of the 550 seats, as votes in all but six of more than 158,000 ballot boxes across the country were counted.

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso congratulated Erdogan's victory. "This comes at an important moment for the people of Turkey as the country moves forward with political and economic reforms," Barroso said in a statement. The EU chief said that Erdogan "has given his personal commitment to the sustained movement towards" the EU. The 27-nation bloc, while divided over whether Turkey should one day join the club, continues to spur Ankara to continue reforms to keep on track its membership bid. Ruling party supporters clapped, danced and waved flags depicting the party symbol, a light bulb, outside the party's office in Istanbul. In Ankara, hundreds whooped as they watched election results on a big TV screen set up outside party headquarters. "We are very happy," university student Reyhan Aksoy said. "God willing, great days await us."

The election was called early to defuse a showdown with the military-backed, secular establishment, which contended that Erdogan and his allies were plotting to scrap Turkey's secular traditions despite their openness to the West. Erdogan raised concern with his efforts as prime minister to make adultery a crime and appoint former Islamists to key positions. Critics also were troubled by his calls for the lifting of restrictions on the wearing of Islamic headscarves.

We congratulate the democratic-Islamic forces of Turkey for their election victory. It was very hard for them. From the shadows the Turkish army was urging people to reject AKP but the Turkish people the call of the army. People also did not listen to Kemalist Republican Party as they proved themselves the agents of extremist secularists.

In the context of Turkey, the Islamic forces there have taken a wise policy of not disturbing the official secular character of the state and carry out social, economic and cultural policy on the basis of justice which is in reality a key pillar of action in Islam. The forced and dictatorial ultra-secularism gave them no other option. We are still not sure whether the extremist secularists and Kemalists will accept with good grace this democratis-Islamist party's victory in Turkish election. The beating that army has got in Turkey just after another beating army got in Pakistan is good for the Muslim world. They have no right to rule from behind or from the front.

25.07.2007.

US Bombardment of Somali Town

Al-Jazeera and other news agencies have reported that US has launched missile attack on Dhoble, a remote Somali town 220km from the southern port city of Kismayu on the Kenyan border. The attack on Monday, confirmed by the US, is the fourth US strike in Somalia in 14 months.

Sheikh Mukhtar Robow, a spokesman for the Islamic Courts movement which is fighting against the interim Somali government, said: "Americans bombed the town and hit civilian targets thinking that they were Islamist hideouts. "They used an AC 130 plane," Robow said.

The US said the strike was directed at "a known al-Qaeda terrorist", but did not say who. A man in Kismayu, who said the house that was hit belonged to him, told Reuters news agency that his daughter was among the wounded. In January 2007, the US attacked southern Somalia in what was Washington's first overt military action in the country since pulling out of a UN-backed peacekeeping mission in 1994. That attack targeted members of the Islamic Courts fleeing from Ethiopian backed weak Somali forces during a two-week war to rout the movement. In June 2007, a US navy destroyer shelled targets in mountainous and remote areas in northeastern Somalia where anti-government fighters were believed to have bases.

We are worried at this development in Somalia. US was instrumental in sending Ethiopian troops there in the last year intervening on behalf of one side in Somali civil war., the only ostensible reason is Islamic crediantial of the Islamic Courts Movement in control of Mogadishu .US had been interfering in Somalia for the last 20 years but they have not been able to solve problem. US has not been able to solve any problem any where by military means. The US has become an international problem creator of the worst kind, in Afganistan, in Iraq, in Palestine, in many parts of Latin America and Africa. We ask the American people to bring their government to senses.

05.03.2008

US Meddling Is The Cause Of Palestinian Crisis

IslamOnline.net & Newspapers have reported that the US intervention in the Palestinian affairs and categorization of Palestinian factions into moderates and extremists are partly to blame for the Gaza chaos, the intensifying power struggle between Fatah and Hamas and left plans for a unified Palestinian state up in the air, American analysts said Friday, June 15. "The less we try to intervene and shape Palestinian politics, the better off we will be," Robert Malley, an expert on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with the International Crisis Group, told The Washington Post. Democracy brought Hamas to power in a shock win to the US administration, Israel and the West, which all tried their best to marginalize Hamas and slapped a crippling economic boycott of its government.

Washington organized a financial boycott of the government, in an effort to showcase Abbas as a moderate alternative in his role as president. Well-placed sources had further told Reuters that the US and EU backed the training of Fatah's troops in Jordan to reinforce Abbas in any showdown with Hamas. "Ever since Hamas won Palestinian legislative elections last January, President Bush and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel have done everything they could think of to isolate Hamas and far less than they might have to help Fatah's most important remaining leader, the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas," The New York Times said in its editorial on Friday. "Seventeen months later, Hamas is that much stronger and Fatah is that much weaker. With the pretense of joint government now shattered, the Palestinian power struggle is certain to continue, even to intensify," it added.

Experts say Abbas's declaration of an emergency cabinet in the West Bank holds out the prospects of two cabinets and finally early elections, an option staunchly opposed by Hamas. They say the US and Israel, both announced their full support for Abbas Thursday, would work now on consolidating "Abbas's government" in the West Bank. According to Friday's edition of The Washington Post, US officials signaled that they will move quickly to persuade the Quartet to lift aid restrictions on the emergency government, allowing direct aid to flow to the West Bank-based cabinet that Abbas will lead. "There is no more Hamas-led government. It is gone," a senior administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told the Post. The official said the dissolution of the Hamas-led government is a singular moment that will allow the United States and its allies to create a "new model of engagement." The United States on Thursday endorsed Abbas' decision to declare an emergency government in the West Bank. "President Abbas has exercised his lawful authority as president of the Palestinian Authority and leader of the Palestinian people," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said.

We are saddened at the turn of events in Palestinian struggle for independent state. We can not understand how the US and Israel have become friends of Fatah. Indeed US and Israel have succeeded in dividing the Palestinian ranks and create agents who will serve them. The Arab League and OIC have to make maximum effort to solve the problems created by the enemies of Palestinian cause. Fatah and Hamas have to sacrifice some of their demands. Hamas have to be more responsible and more sacrificing as they truly represent the Palestinian majority. The interest of Palestinian people is more important and Hamas has to keep it in mind even if they suffer politically. We hope Fatah understands that US and Israel are not their friends, they want to exploit them.

18.06.2007.

War Talk of French Prime Minister

News Agencies have reported that France followed up a warning that the Iran nuclear crisis could lead to war by calling yesterday for European sanctions against Tehran. French Prime Minister Francois Fillon said tensions with Iran are now "extreme", heightening a diplomatic storm caused by Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner's warning on Sunday that the world should prepare for a conflict over Iran's alleged work on a nuclear weapon. The comments infuriated Iranian leaders who accused France of stoking "tensions". International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei called the war talk "hype". But while French leaders said they would prefer a negotiated settlement, they also launched a proposal to establish European sanctions against Iran, outside of those already implemented by the United Nations. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany are to discuss new UN sanctions on Iran, which has rejected demands to stop enriching uranium. Kouchner met his Dutch counterpart Maxime Verhagen in Paris and said European countries should prepare their own non-UN sanctions.

Britain, France and Germany have led European pressure, with US backing, to try to persuade Iran to end its nuclear efforts in exchange for a package of economic and diplomatic measures.

Verhagen said that if the Security Council did not agree more sanctions, the Dutch government would be willing "to apply European Union sanctions in common with the United States sanctions." On Sunday, Kouchner used the toughest language to date from a French minister, warning that "we have to prepare for the worst, and the worst is war." If Tehran possessed an atomic weapon, it would be a "real danger for the whole world," he said in an interview. Speaking Monday, the French prime minister said: "The Iranians must understand that tension has reached an extreme point... in the relationship between Iran and its neighbours." He added however that "a confrontation with Iran is the last option that any political leader would want." The French campaign cast a shadow over an IAEA general conference in Vienna, where Iran's nuclear programme tops the agenda. Iran has always said that its nuclear work is peaceful and Vice President Reza Aghazadeh, who is also head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation (AEOI), warned the West against seeking a confrontation.

It is strange that some European leaders, particularly the French Prime Minister, instead of calming down the situation created by regular US threats against Iran, have joined in a campaign against Iran. It seems the new French government under President Sarkozy will take a more aggressive policy than before in line with the neo-conservative leadership in the US. They have no shame that they have already ruined two countries in Asia and now embarking on the third. There is none in the world to stop them, this is the sad part of the story. Their new adventure, if materializes, will not only cripple Iran but also themselves.

19.09.2007.

What Is New About Condoleezza Rice's Statement

AFP has reported from Jerusalem that US secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said yesterday that the Hamas movement ruling the Gaza Strip was a "hostile entity" for the United States, after Israel made a similar declaration. "Hamas is indeed a hostile entity. It is a hostile entity to the US as well," Rice said at a joint press conference with Israeli counterpart Tzipi Livni. Earlier, Israel's powerful security cabinet declared the Hamas-run Gaza Strip a "hostile entity," paving the way for the government to cut the supplies of electricity and fuel into the impoverished territory in revenge for rocket attacks. "This is Israel's response to the ongoing Qassams," a senior government official told AFP, referring to the homemade rockets militants fired into Israel from the coastal strip. The official said the cabinet did not take any immediate decisions to turn off the taps to the impoverished territory -- home to 1.5 million Palestinians -- but that the move "clears the way for the government to do so."

On Thursday she heads to Ramallah for meetings with Abbas and prime minister Salam Fayyad before returning to Jerusalem for talks with Olmert. Rice told journalists travelling with her that the peace conference, expected in November, "has to, in a substantive way, support the activities and the efforts of the parties to lay the foundations for the negotiation of a Palestinian state as soon as possible."

What is new about Rice's statement or Israeli stance? US or Israel never accepted HAMAS who came in power through election, it is also committed to democracy except that they are also committed to resistance against occupying power and want liberation. US and Israel denied any real solution for the last forty years after 1967 war when Israel occupied West Bank and Gaza. US saw to it that HAMAS government fails and the Palestinians are divided.

We do not know what is the end of all this. Will their friendship with Abbas last long or can US deliver? We have doubts.

21.09.2007

POLITICS

A Motivated Campaign Against Jamaat-e-Islami

Communications Adviser Maj Gen (retd) MA Matin said on Wednesday that only three Jamaat-e-Islami leaders were arrested so far, because most of the other party members might not have any link with corruption as partners in the last BNP-led four-party alliance government. "Well, questions were raised regarding this issue [lack of Jamaat arrests]. But it might well be that they were never involved in any corruption," Matin told reporters in his office yesterday. He said, "Jamaat is not being spared. If we receive any specific allegation, orders will be issued for an investigation."

Surprisingly a systematic campaign is being conducted by a section of the press to implicate the Jamaat people. An English daily headlined the news as "Matin plays down graft by Jamaat leader" and then gave a series of stories against Jammat people even though cases have not been filed or charge-sheets submitted. This story is just a repetition of a news headlined against Jamaat only a few days back.

We have seen how some journalists are asking to the Advisors why Jamaat people are not being arrested? We are surprised at the fall of journalistic standard of fairness. The journalists normally try to protect people from abuse of law, here a different thing is happening. As if Jammat people have to be arrested on hearsay or even if they have not committed any crime. We deplore the conduct of these people who are using their journalistic power for motivated reporting without any qualms of conscience.

27.07.2007

Bangladesh Political Situation Has Become Complicated : Review Is Needed

News papers have reported that the BNP-led alliance on Sunday said they would not participate in the local government polls as it believed that contesting the elections would legitimize the 'illegal activities' of the caretaker government. If any grassroots leaders contest the polls, despite such stance of the alliance, they will do it on their own and the parties concerned will take action in this regard, the alliance said. The alliance asked the government to implement its [alliance] five-point demand to create an atmosphere conducive to peaceful transfer of power to people's elected representatives. The BNP secretary general, Khandaker Delwar Hossain, announced the alliance's stance after a two-hour meeting at the Baridhara house of Bangladesh Jatiya Party chairman Andaleev Rahman. 'The question of participating in the polls to give legitimacy to the illegal activities of this government does not arise... According to article 58/Ga/1 of the constitution they have no authority to hold such elections and article 58/Ga/2 indicates that their only job is to hold parliamentary polls', Delwar told reporters after the meeting. 'The High Court has already given a verdict that the government has violated its constitutional obligations but they [caretaker administration] have turned a deaf ear', he said. The demands of the alliance Delwar announced at the meeting included release of all political detainees, including BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia and party leaders Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Moudud Ahmed, MK Anwar, Shamsul Islam and Tariqul Islam and Jamaat-e-Islami amir Matiur Rahman Nizami, lifting of the state of emergency by Monday [June 30] as demanded by Khaleda Zia, release of Khaleda's sons Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman and sending them abroad for better treatment, holding of parliamentary polls first, and cancellation of the local government polls schedule. The BNP leader accused the government of taking Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman hostage for bargaining. 'On what issue do you want to bargain? We do not believe in any bargain ignoring the interests of the people', he said. 'Khaleda Zia asked the government to lift the state of emergency by June 30. But it has not been done till date and there is no indication they will do it. They are hell-bent on holding polls with the help of Awami League and some residual forces in politics. I ask them to refrain from temporary temptation', he said. 'We are happy that Abdul Jalil has been sent abroad for treatment and later Sheikh Hasina too went abroad. What is wrong with the two youths... Why such double standards, he asked.

The BNP secretary general fired a broadside at the Awami League accusing it of 'contradictory' activities and striking an 'entente' with the government. 'This government came to power with the help of Awami League and blessings of foreign quarters.' The Awami League and their allies went to Bangabhaban on January 12, 2007 and before her first foreign tour after January 11, 2007, Sheikh Hasina had said this government was the result of their [AL] movement and that they would give legitimacy to all its activities, Delwar recalled. 'Sheikh Hasina had labelled the announcement of the [local] election schedule as a mockery. The party's [AL] central working committee had announced a five-point demand, including lifting of the emergency, trial of war criminals and holding of national elections first. But now they are contesting the polls and the reasons are understandable', Delwar said. 'Taking stand against the country and democracy is nothing new for this party [AL]. It was the Awami League which introduced a single-party rule violating the 1972 constitution, contested the 1986 polls backing away from commitment, indulged in conspiracies to block BNP and the nationalist forces from returning to power and prepared the ground for the

January 11 happening’, Delwar said. ‘I had given a call for unity of all parties for the sake of the nation and the country and I leave it to you to judge how that call was rejected. I still urge the people of the country to be united against the illegal activities of the government’, he said.

New complications we feel have arisen because of insistence of the government and the election commission to hold local elections at this stage though it is not their constitutional mandate. They have taken too much time in dialogue which was not very necessary. Dialogue with civil society at different places was unnecessary as the political parties represent all sections of the country. It was also unnecessary to delay election so much in the name of voter list. The previous voter list could be updated in a few weeks without photograph but this was not done. As a result an unelected government continued and the violation of the constitution extended for a longer time. The present situation may lead to further chaos in the country. The country’s political division has increased after eleventh January 2007 as more parties have come up in the scene. We request the government to cancel the local elections and hold the Parliamentary election within October this year.

01.07.2008.

Khaleda Zia Clarifies Her Political Position

A national daily has published an exclusive interview of Khaleda Zia, the former Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson, on 19th of June in which she has clarified her political position on some important issues. In reply to a question she said that reform is an ongoing process. BNP had initiated reforms long back and paved the way for multiparty democracy in Bangladesh. I believe it is only through reforms that a political party can survive the test of time in a fast developing country. . All reform proposals shall be discussed openly in party forums and council sessions. I welcome any suggestion for reforms from my party leaders and workers from across the country.

She said in reply to other questions that she is “an elected chairperson by the council which is the supreme body to decide on any changes in the party. All will get opportunity to participate in the discussions” False, fabricated and baseless charges have been brought to tarnish the image of Zia family. However I respect law of the land and expect fair and proper trial.” Party decisions were always taken in consultation with standing committee members. Govt. decisions were always taken in consultation and discussion with my cabinet colleagues. I never believe in unilateral decision. She also said that she is spending her time in reading general and Islamic books and in prayers.

We welcome the clarifications given by Khaleda Zia. There were a lot of stories about her and her party which were published in various news papers. Now the people have come to know her position and the people can better judge the relevant issues.

21.06.2007

New Political Situation

On the declaration of emergency on 11th January the country has entered into a new political phase. There was not only declaration of emergency but the election of 22nd January was also effectively postponed which was confirmed later by the Election Commission.

On the next day, the 12th of January, the new Care-taker Chief was sworn in and other Advisors would soon be appointed. The problem now is the constitutionality of the whole process. We do not find under the emergency powers of the constitution any provision to postpone election beyond ninety days of the dissolution of the Parliament. Under emergency provisions certain fundamental rights can be curtailed and right of writ petitions in the Supreme court can be suspended but there is no mention that election can be suspended. In the chapter on election also in the constitution it is incumbent on the Election Commission to hold election within ninety days as we have said above.

As such the country has crossed the bounds of constitutionality by postponing the election. The constitutionality of the care taker government also is linked with the holding election in time. We feel that everything relating to the election and caretaker government is now subject to question. All these things are the result of the illegal agitation of the grand alliance, interference of the diplomats and some foreign offices in favour of the wrong party.

We do not find any solution within the constitution except that the Supreme Court may guide the nation on reference by the President as to how we can get out of this confusing situation.

14.01.2007.

No Time For Further Political Move

The boycott of election by Awami – League led alliance has left no time for any authority to make further move for political resolution of the crisis. The civil society, advisors or diplomats have no time for that. Election is just round the corner, there are just 15 days before the ballot will be cast.

We wrote a few days back that Awami League grand alliance should desist from boycott or agitation at this stage and participate in election. However our hopes have not been fulfilled

The argument of Awami League boycott is totally flawed. The voter list issue is irrelevant after it has been corrected over 10 days through a national campaign, particularly after submission of nomination papers. The opinion of some Awami- League minded lawyers that election can be held after 90 days have misguided the alliance. These are mere opinions, that also apparently politically inspired. These lawyers really did not help Awami League to follow a certain constitutional course.

The election commission has now to proceed to hold the election on time. The CEC has said that they are all set for holding the election to meet the deadline.

Some of the Advisors think that the problem can be still solved. This is day-dreaming. There is no point in further negotiation with any of the groups. The only duty for the President and the Advisors is to help the EC to hold the election in time, the constitutional requirement of holding election in 90 days have to be fulfilled

06.01.2007.

Please Do Not Open New Front

We have noted from various press reports that that strong resentment has grown in the Private Universities on two issues. One is the new proposed law about the Private Universities. They are dis-satisfied about many new provisions which they feel will harm these universities. It has been reported that the role of the founders has been significantly reduced which they believe will harm the universities. It will bureaucratize these institutions.

Second point is the issue of outer campus. This is a term which occurred first in the letters of the Ministry of education. When some universities opened branch of the university in another city, the Ministry of education called it outer campus. They approved and regularized some such campuses. Other universities have opened and applied for approval of outer campuses. In this state of affairs, the Ministry has decided to close all these so-called outer campuses. Some of these campuses have three to four thousand students. The Association of Private Universities has already represented to the government and also held press conference to explain their view-points.

We do not think this is the time for creating a new problem front for the government when the country is reeling under a prolonged flood, serious economic and political problems. We urge the government to solve these issues through discussion with the Association of Private Universities. Some private universities or their outer campuses may have problem but this should not be generalized. Even public universities have many problems. We urge the government to go slow in this matter.

20.08.2007

Recent Judgment And Political Parleys

We have seen the judgment of the High Court (HC) .It did not make any decision as to which faction of BNP--the one led by the party's detained Chairperson Khaleda Zia and the one led by M Saifur Rahman--is the mainstream of the party.

The HC discharged the writ petition on a technical ground saying it is not maintainable since the Election Commission dialogue does not come under any legal bindings. The dispute centering the invitation letter is political which also does not come under the jurisdiction of the HC writ bench.

Interpreting the verdict, a few lawyers involved with the case said the EC letter to Hafiz is valid as the HC did not declare it illegal. Meanwhile, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the EC might informally ask both feuding factions of BNP to settle their disputes and sit together in the dialogue. The HC division bench comprising Justice Mirza Hossain Hyder and Justice Mamnoon Rahman also said the court in its constitutional jurisdiction cannot deal with matters involving internal disputes between political factions. The court in its order said according to articles 118 and 119 of the constitution and the electoral law, there is no provision for EC's holding dialogue with political parties.

If anything were said in the law on this matter, the court could have resolved where it deviates from the law, the court said, adding that according to article 102 of the constitution, the HC writ bench cannot adjudicate matters involving internal disputes of a political party. The court also referred to the judgment given by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court that the HC cannot take any decision on a matter involving politics.

We feel that the political parleys of EC is back now to squire one. Only wisdom can improve the suggestion. EC should not that the Court's judgment is not on te merit of the decision of the EC. It does not mean that the decision of EC was wise. All the major parties have spoken that EC has created the problem. We now request the EC and the Government to sit with Khaled Zia (and whosoever she brings with her) in their respective parleys. All know that for all practical purposes Khaleda Zia is BNP even if somebody may not like it, we have seen a hundred percent grass root support in BNP is for Khaleda Zia.

The Un Statement On Bangladesh Political Situation

The UN has now issued a statement calling for a peaceful election and participation of all political parties. This statement has been issued after similar statement by the United States, U. K, Australia and some others. The United Nations announced that it would suspend all technical support to the electoral process. In a press release from the UN, secretary general's spokesperson in New York confirmed that it would shut down its office to coordinate poll watchers in Dhaka. The UN raised concerns over the political stalemate in Bangladesh and urged political parties to shun violence. It highlighted the need for the Army to remain neutral and asked law enforcers to show restraint and be respectful of human rights. The UN called on the caretaker government and the election commission to "create a level playing field" and warned that a continuation of the crisis could negatively affect Bangladesh's international standing.

To us it appears to be a routine statement of the UN. It repeats the old jargon of some other diplomatic offices. The UN did not distinguish between the rogue party and the party not responsible for the present situation. I have assumed that the Army or the Caretaker government is not neutral. This is not a fair view. In the past, the UN except in a few cases has always followed the US. Most of the people know the influence of US and some western countries over UN. It has happened this time also

We do not understand the purpose of the belated statements of the UN and some other countries. . Where they were in the last two and a half months? They all know that efforts of the Care-taker government and the diplomats posted in Bangladesh, even visit of US Asstt Secretary of States, could not finally bring Awami League to election despite many concessions given to them by the Government and the Election Commission. They also know the constitutional limitation of holding election in 90 days. Does the American would accept any violation of their constitution? Would UN violate its charter? So how they expect the same from Bangladesh?

We do not think these are serious or useful statements. These are just to placate some lobbies active in the West who are working for the so-called grand alliance. We do not think the Government of Bangladesh can violate its constitution to please some foreign quarters.

We may also mention in passing that the record of UN in problem solving is not very good. Any body can look around and find out.

12.01.2007.

Unwarranted Political Programme Of Grand Alliance

The Awami League alliance has declared its agitational programme from Paltan Maidan meeting of 10th January which includes Hartal (strike) and Aborodh (seize) from 14th to 22nd with two breaks. The alliance leaders Sheikh Hasina, Mr Ershad and Mr Badruddoza Chowdhury spoke in the meeting.They demanded the cancellation of election due on 22nd January and repeated all other old demands. Mr Ershad gave an emotional speech without any substanc. Mr Chowdhury in essence spoke against the President.Sheikh Hasina declared the programme.

There is no doubt that all these programme are illegal and un-lawful, particularly Aborodh because it obstructs fundamental right of freedom of movement of the people. These are also damaging for the image of the country, for the economy and for the people. These will also not solve any problem. There is no way to postpone the election at this stage. These may also create civil war like situation because 1500 candidates and 39 parties contesting in the election will resist any programme to stop voters from casting ballot. Begum Khaleda Zia has already declared her intention in this regard on the same day in several election meeting in Comilla region.

Why this programme now when the Awami League for sure knows that this will be fruitless? One reason is face saving among their supporters as there is no other way to retract from their grand mistake of election boycott at the last stage giving no body any real chance to resolve the crisis. Another reason, of course, is a last-ditch effort to force the Government to cancel the election with the support of foreign diplomats and some foreign governments.

We do not think that these moves will be of any use. Only thing is that the nation has to suffer further because of bad politics of grand alliance.

12.01.2007.

LAW

A New Phase In Independence of Judiciary

The judiciary becomes independent from 1st of July as the government puts into effect two sets of rules on judicial service today. Set rolling the final step towards making the judiciary independent, the interim government on June 27 published two gazette notifications to be in force on July 1 on the Bangladesh Judicial Service (Constitution, Recruitment and Suspension and Termination) Rules 2007 and the Bangladesh Judicial Service (Posting, Promotion, Leave, Control, Discipline and Other Conditions of Service) Rules 2007. The rules were given effect in keeping with the Supreme Court's advice. The full-court reference (meeting) of the Supreme Court of May 10, attended by all the judges of the High Court and the Appellate Division, decided to put in force the two sets of rules on the judicial service on July 1. The rules, along with the Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission Rules 2007 and the Bangladesh Judicial Service Pay Commission Rules, were framed on January 16. Once the rules come into effect, the judicial service, including judicial magistracy, will come under the direct supervision and control of the Supreme Court.

The rules stipulate that the existing magistrates, willing to work in the judiciary, will be absorbed into the judicial service for three years. In the meantime, the required number of magistrates will be appointed for the judicial service. The separation of the judiciary from the executive puts in service two sets of magistrates - judicial and executive - and separate criminal courts, all run by judicial officers.

The cases pending with the courts of the district magistrates or additional district magistrates will be transferred to the court of the district sessions judges and the cases pending with the court of the executive magistrate will be transferred to the court of the chief judicial magistrate of the district. The judicial service will have two parts - judges and judicial magistrates. The posts of judges will be district and sessions judges, additional district and sessions judges, joint district and sessions judges, senior assistant judges and assistant judges. The posts of judicial magistrates will be chief metropolitan magistrates or chief judicial magistrates, additional chief metropolitan magistrates or additional chief judicial magistrates, senior judicial magistrates or metropolitan magistrates and judicial magistrates.

Executive magistrates, including deputy commissioners, stand stripped of judicial powers and functions from today as the rules on the judicial service and the amended Code of Criminal Procedure come into effect making the judiciary independent of the executive. The executive magistrates, however, will not lose the executive powers and functions they now exercise. The executive magistrates will have 15-point ordinary powers and functions, including the power to command law enforcers to disperse any unlawful assembly, to arrest or direct the arrest of offenders, to endorse a warrant or order for removal of an accused person arrested under warrant, to enable search by postal and telegraph authorities for documents and to detain them, to issue search warrants, to direct search of any place, to require security to keep peace or for good behavior, to discharge sureties, to require civil or military force to be used to disperse unlawful assembly, to make orders as to local nuisance and to issue injunction as immediate measure in the case of public nuisance.

We hope this independence of lower judiciary from the executive branch will be good for the people. The judicial magisterial courts can not now be influenced by higher level officers and political bosses. This was the bane before, the bails in particular used to be given on political considerations. The people used to suffer a lot in jails as it would be difficult to get bail even in appropriate cases. It was difficult for ordinary people to move to higher courts for bails because of huge expenditure. The judgments in the cases before the magistrates could be dictated by higher officials and political bosses in many cases. This will also not be possible now. We hope this new change will bring more justice than before. Of course many more reforms are necessary in future including simplifying the procedure and an easy and comprehensive arrangement by the state to give legal assistance to the poor.

01.07.2007.

Bail Petition And Emergency Power Rules

Newspapers have reported that hearing on bail petitions of different cases filed under the Penal Code started in Dhaka courts after 16 days yesterday following the third amendment to the Emergency Power Rules 2007 on Sunday. On the first day, over 150 people arrested in cases filed with different police stations were granted bail. The District and Sessions Judge's Court and Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka yesterday took up the bail petitions for hearing and granted bail to a number of arrestees who had cases filed against them under the Penal Code.

Earlier on March 21, the government promulgated an amendment, suspending the rights to petition for bail and seek redress from any higher court until a case is resolved in a trial court. It caused uproar among the lawyers, litigants and rights activists. Now the provision has been amended and provision for bail has been made. However, arrestees with charges of corruption, smuggling, hoarding, black-marketing, money laundering, illegal possession of firearms, explosive substances, foreign currency, and narcotics, tax evasion and other crimes considered a threat to security of the state, people and the economy were not eligible for bail.

We are surprised that such a serious restriction on granting bail was made in the first instance. Apart from the fact that taking away power of bail from the courts leave people totally at the mercy of the executive functionaries, the authorities failed to consider its other impact. There are two to four thousand arrest every day in the country and the accommodation capacity of the jail is very limited. What happens in such a situation is imaginable. The prisons are overflowing and the inmates are suffering terribly.

We ask the government to give serious thought before making such far-reaching amendment of law without impact study. We have seen the result of hurry in the eviction campaign and in closing down some godowns with consumer items and food-staff on charges that these had some stock without document or these had some unusable items etc. Hurry does not help us in serious issues. It was a clear mistake to stop all bails and we hope the government should take lesson from the past mistakes as we have mentioned.

12.4.2007.

ECONOMICS

Banks Should Give More Finance To Rural businesses and Farmers

A fellow daily has reported that a study has shown that small businesses and farmers are unable to fully develop in rural areas due to the lack of access to finance. Banks are keen to collect deposits in rural areas but they are less willing to lend. For every taka deposited or collected in rural areas by banks, only half of this amount is lent there, the study revealed. The joint study 'Access to Rural Finance' was conducted by Bangladesh government, the World Bank and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). It found that bank lending to agriculture and rural small businesses has been decreasing significantly in recent years.

This shortfall was not being made up for by micro credit, as small enterprises and small and medium farmers are not traditionally micro credit clients. The study also examined the role of Bangladesh's financial institutions, including state-owned Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) and Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank (RAKUB), commercial banks and microfinance institutions. The study found that while the two agricultural banks provide limited services to the agricultural sector, their outreach is seriously constrained by 'very weak financial performance.' Private commercial banks do not serve rural areas partly due to their limited branch networks and partly because their products and procedures are not suitable for small transactions.

We consider the findings of the study should be taken very seriously. The commercial Banks should give more finance to the farmers and traders in rural areas where bulk of the people live. The micro-credit and micro-finance organizations should review their program and at least a part of their fund should be utilized in financing small businesses and farmers. The Islami Banks in particular should give attention to this area which will help them achieve their objective of social justice, creation of employment and eradication of poverty.

9.5.2007.

BB Governor Speaks about Islamic Banking Guideline

Newspapers have reported that standard Chartered Bank has launched new Shariah –based financing product under the brand name of Sadiq. In the opening function The central bank governor has called for a guideline on Islamic banking in Bangladesh. He urged the Islamic thinkers, economists and bankers to come forward to outline such a guideline.

Standard Chartered Bank has launched its new Islamic banking brand, Saadiq, offering a range of Shari'ah-compliant financial solutions through the bank's service. The bank also introduced two credit cards -- Saadiq Gold and Saadiq Green, the first-ever Shari'ah-compliant interest-free credit cards in Bangladesh. The BB chief said successful ventures of Islamic banking linked to specialised skills and clear understanding of profit-sharing methods of financial transactions that meet the basic requirements of the Quran and Shari'ah. Imparting training on distinctive features of Islamic banking principles and techniques to the practicing bankers is therefore of paramount importance, Dr Salehuddin said.

Speaking in the function Mr. Shah Abdul Hannan, a former secretary of the government said that the concepts, modes , accounting and auditing principles have been made almost fully clear by the scholars and bankers who are working in the field of Islamic Banking. It has also the necessary institutions now such as an international bank, a supervisory organization Islamic Financial Services Board, Association of Accounting and Auditing for Islamic Financial Institutions. He also said that Islamic Banking has come to this stage facing the doubts of doubters, taunts and enmity of many others. The attempt by many forces to link Islamic banking with terrorist financing after 9/11 has failed.

Speaking at the function, Standard Chartered Bank Chief Executive Officer Osman Morad said Stan Chart's global Islamic business has more than doubled since 2006, and continues to grow at a rapid pace. "With the launch of our global Islamic banking brand, Saadiq, we aim to capitalise on all future worldwide growth in this emerging industry for the benefit of our customers and stakeholders alike, and lead the way with our innovative, best-in-class Shari'ah-compliant financial products," he said. The bank's new brand is offering Saadiq current account, Saadiq savings account, Saadiq term deposit, Saadiq personal finance and Saadiq auto finance services. All Saadiq customers will also enjoy the bank's ATM network, online banking and call-centre facilities. Standard Chartered Bank Head of Consumer Banking Vikram Issar and Head of Islamic Banking Abida Ali also spoke at the function. Abida Ali sought the co-operation of all concerned.

We welcome the new Islamic banking initiative of Standard Chartered. We also welcome the speech of the Governor Bangladesh Bank. We request the Governor to speedily finalise a practical and forward looking guideline for Islamic Banking which falls under his jurisdiction.

07.07.2007.

Corporatisation Of Govt Owned Banks

The council of advisers to the caretaker government yesterday approved the draft bylaws required to turn the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs)--Sonali, Janata and Agrani--into public limited companies, according to news reports. An advisory council meeting at the Chief Adviser's Office gave the approval to the draft Memorandum and Articles of Association.

It is reported that corporatisation of these Banks was a condition of the World Bank (WB) set for the release of \$200-million fourth installment of Development Support Credit.

This step as stated is clearly a decision forced on the government by the World Bank and there was no opportunity for the Parliament to scrutinize or discuss the matter. Any such major step without a discussion in the Parliament is not good.

The World Bank advises many times in the past have not proved good in many countries of South-East Asia and Latin America. They essentially carry out the agenda of neo capitalism and neo-imperialism. Their prescriptions many times are aimed at opening the market of developing countries to the products of the West. We have seen how in Bangladesh we have repeatedly reduced duty rates which only increased our imports at the cost of our well-earned foreign exchange.

How far this corporatisation will help efficiency we are not sure but it will put the government in difficulty in supporting certain sectors of economy. A Bank is not only a profit-making institution it can also serve the weaker sections if some Banks remain with the government.

We ask the government to place the whole thing before the next Parliament for a full discussion on all aspects of the matter as it appears that they can not do any other thing at this stage.

05.02.2007.

Islamic Development Bank President's Visit

IDB president Dr. Ahmad had a busy and successful visit of Bangladesh. In this visit apart from the government program, he attended the Annual General meeting of the the Islami Bangladesh Limited of which the Islamic Development Bank is a sponsor share-holder. He addressed the AGM and expressed his satisfaction of the micro-finance operation of IBBL in nine thousand villages and expressed his desire to make the IBBL program as a model for the Muslim world with suitable adjustments in their ten billion dollar poverty reduction program in their member-countries.. He also in the evening addressed the village women leaders of IBBL micro-finance program where women leaders of Muslim and Hindu communities expressed their experience with IBBL micro-finance program (Rural Development Scheme).

The IDB president signed three agreements were signed between the government of Bangladesh and the IDB following a meeting between the finance adviser, AB Mirza Azizul Islam, and the visiting IDB president, Ahmad Mohamed Ali, at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in Dhaka on Friday. The secretary of economic relations division, Mohammad Aminul Islam Bhuiyan, and the IDB president signed the agreements on behalf of the Bangladesh government and the IDB respectively. The finance adviser was present on the occasion.

Earlier, the finance adviser and the IDB president discussed matters of mutual interest particularly strengthening IDB cooperation in areas like agriculture, education, health, rural infrastructure, power and support Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation for importing crude oil and petroleum products. Ahmad Mohammad Ali assured the finance adviser of IDB's further cooperation in the coming years. The IDB president also assured the Bangladesh government of providing assistance for rehabilitation of the flood-hit people in Bangladesh and sending a mission soon for making an assessment of damage caused by the floods.

We are happy at this successful visit of IDB president. It will increase bi-lateral co-operation between Bangladesh and IDB. We are also happy that IDB considers IBBL micro finance model as the basis for its shariah-compliant model for its member countries. We know that IDB wants to integrate waqf and Zakat with micro finance. This is very much possible as has been discussed in various conferences organized by Muslim Aid, UK and Islamic Economics Research Bureau, Dhaka. We hope ten billion dollar IDB fund would be used in the best possible manner.

02.09.2007.

Minimum Profits For Businesses In the Present Time

The newly elected president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Annisul Huq, Monday urged traders to make minimum profit for the next one year so that consumers, facing exorbitant price hikes, get some respite, according to press reports. 'We cannot ask businessmen to make no profit but earnestly urging you (traders) to make minimum profits for at least one year,' said Annis, addressing the ceremony for distributing National Export Trophy. Ministry of commerce organized the ceremony attended by chief adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed.

Annis said commoners are endlessly suffering due to exorbitant hikes on the prices of essential commodities checking of which has become the top challenge for the state and economy. 'Let us be proactive together to keep prices of essentials tolerable for commoners and try to get rid of blames for profiteering, hoarding and corruption,' he urged businessmen. The FBCCI president requested the government to arrange enough imports of food grains take initiative to construct grain warehouse having huge capacities. 'We need not comfort on a \$6 billion foreign exchange reserve keeping poor people starved,' he added. Annis said government needs to be tough on bankers as their sky-high rate of interests on industrial financing were making entrepreneurs sick. He viewed that people from many government departments enjoy discretionary power and this is abused for harassing even businessmen on the basis perceived allegation.

We welcome the speech of FBCCI chief but he must implement it through local business organizations. The senior leader of FBCCI should go round to monitor the situation. His points about reserve, however, is not based on facts. The central bank did not hold up any by not releasing foreign exchange. In fact we should take care of reserve also which keeps us free from many pressures and in fact we should build up reserve of 25 billion dollar.

02.04.2008.

Reform World Bank And IMF

AFP has reported that South Africa's president Thabo Mbeki called Sunday for the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to be more representative and accountable. Both organizations had to become more representative in their membership and leadership structures to better serve the new world economy, he told an annual gathering of the International Monetary Conference in Cape Town. "The distribution of voting shares in the Fund and Bank need reform the better to reflect the more plural economic world we live in now ... as well as to prepare for the changes to come," he said. "Gains to legitimacy will translate into gains in effectiveness -- we must have the courage to make them happen." Enhanced legitimacy would come about through better representation and accountability, Mbeki said.

This would also involve reform of the procedures by which heads of the IMF and World Bank are chosen. "The recent resignation of Paul Wolfowitz from his position as head of the World Bank has reopened the debate about that process," said Mbeki. "Future appointments should be made using an open and transparent selection process with candidates not restricted by nationality."

According to an unwritten rule, the United States chooses the president of the World Bank. European states however designate the head of the International Monetary Fund, the other institution born out of the 1944 Bretton Woods agreements. A number of political leaders Chilean President Michelle Bachelet have criticized the practice. Bachelet last week criticized the decision by US president George W. Bush to nominate former top diplomat and US trade chief Robert Zoellick to replace Wolfowitz as "grotesque".

We agree with the comment of the South African President about the representation in the board of the World Bank and appointment of the President of the World Bank. However there is little hope that the US or even Europe will relent and change things so easily.

Because of the present arrangement, the World Bank is basically only serving the interests of global profit-hungry and exploitative capitalism and neo- imperialism. It always talks of privatization even if some organizations run well. It never talks of nationalization even if private sector plays havoc with the economy and a large section become or remain poor and hungry. Its prescription is always based on capitalism and it never bothers about justice or welfare of the broad masses .The changes are indeed necessary in the structure and operation of the World Bank and IMF.

06.06.07.

Role of Micro-credit Providers: Some Questions

News papers have reported that noted economist and Chairman of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Prof Muzaffar Ahmad yesterday questioned the role of micro-credit providers in poverty reduction of Bangladesh. He also criticized the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for their corruption and intrusion into politics and urged them to make their budget public to bring transparency in their activities. The TIB Chairman was speaking at a convention on "Institutional Good Governance of NGOs" organized by Campaign for Good Governance (Supro) at the LGED auditorium in the city. More than 300 representatives of NGOs from Dhaka and outside participated in the convention. "In our country, NGOs run on foreign funds. Their projects ponder to the wishes of donors. The NGOs have to become self-reliant," Prof Muzaffar said. He suggested NGOs to stop receiving foreign assistance to become self-reliant, claiming that there would be no welfare with foreign money. "We have to have self-reliance and institutional transparency." Pointing to NGO representatives present at the convention, Ahmad said: "You don't stand against the eviction of indigenous people from their ancestral lands, encroachment of rivers and land grabbing. You don't stand against pollution through industrial waste." "Where is your contribution in the field of agriculture? You are speaking of eliminating poverty but you are doing nothing for the betterment of farmers. Rather you are making them poorer by giving loans on high interest. "The NGOs have been used politically, Ahmad alleged. On the operations of micro credit by NGOs, he said: "Many NGOs have disappeared into thin air after taking money meant for micro credit. Big corporate NGOs are involved with other businesses. "The civil society leader also advised reviving the roles of NGOs in safeguarding culture and heritage.

We feel Professor Muzaffar Ahmad has made some very good observations and it is necessary for the NGOs to take a fresh look into their activities, how far they are doing their work in a proper manner. They should not remain dependent for ever on foreign funds. They should not allow them to be used politically. We have seen how badly some of them get involved in party politics.

30.06.2008.

Slowdown in World Economy : Special Program Needed

International Monetary Fund managing director Dominique Strauss-Kahn said Thursday he sees a "major" slowdown in the global economy this year amid a credit market crisis, AFP has reported from Washington. "What is certain is that the situation is very serious and that the slowdown in the United States, and subsequently in the rest of the world, is a slowdown that is going to be major," he said in an interview with AFP ahead of next week's IMF and World Bank spring meetings. "It is not a catastrophic slowdown, but it is a major slowdown," he stressed, five months after becoming managing director of the 185-nation institution. The IMF is set to cut a half point off its 2008 forecast for global economic growth to 3.7 percent on Wednesday, Strauss-Kahn said, confirming media reports but without providing further detail. The IMF, whose mission is to promote global financial stability, is to publish its economic growth forecasts in its biannual World Economic Outlook report next Wednesday. In January, the IMF projected the global economy would expand by 4.1 percent and the US economy would grow by 1.5 percent in 2008. On Tuesday and Wednesday, media reports in Germany said the IMF would lower the global growth projection to 3.7 percent and that of the US to 0.5 percent.

Strauss-Kahn, a former French finance minister who will preside for the first time over the meetings, said that while the United States and European countries are the principal victims of the credit crunch, emerging countries, which have been a global pole of dynamic growth, would also be affected. "I am particularly concerned about the central European countries," he said, without identifying the vulnerable countries except to say they are members of the European Union. To tackle the root of the credit crisis that stemmed from a meltdown in the US housing market, the IMF is mulling a structure that would isolate the risky assets from the rest of the financial system. "The way to get out of the crisis, is to effectively separate the bad risks from the good risks," Strauss-Kahn. That would allow a renewal of confidence and revive the interbank market, where credit flows are down to a trickle. "Today we have banks that no longer lend to each other because they lack confidence -- that is what is freezing up the market," he said.

It is apparent that the world economy is in deep problem .The whole slow down has come from slow down of US economy which is mostly the result of Iraq war which is the cause of heavy expenditure of US .The tax-payers money has been spent for a bad war and development has suffered.

Another major aspect is inflation in most countries and it is growing. In many countries the food prices have increased fifty percent or more in just one year. We are really in for serious economic trouble. We hope IMF comes up with some good plan from its annual meeting.

13.04.2008.

EDUCATION

College Seats For Admission Of Students. Is There Any Problem?

According to a paper report thousands of students who did well in this year's SSC examinations would be denied admission to colleges of their choice as seats in good institutes are disproportionately small for the number of students with GPA 4 and above. This year a whopping 52,500 students got GPA 5 and over 1.9 lakh students scored in between GPA 4 and 5 while the country's renowned colleges can take in fewer than 30,000 intakes. Academics and teachers have suggested introducing double shifts at renowned colleges as a quick fix. "Good students usually try to gain admission to only 10 to 12 renowned colleges in the capital. It is very difficult for us to single out the best students as a government directive does not allow us to hold any admission tests even though the number of GPA 5 holders has increased excessively," said Father Benjamin De Costa, principal of Notre Dame College. The education ministry has also decided to keep 10 per cent seats in the capital's government and non-government colleges reserved for rural students, ministry sources said. Students in the science group will take the brunt of the problem as 1.76 lakh (lakh is equal to one hundred thousand) students will have to compete for 98,000 seats in colleges across the country, which means some 78 thousands students of the group would be forced to switch to commerce or humanities groups. This year around 52,500 students in the science group scored GPA 5 while around 10,000 got 'Golden GPA', a term many teachers, guardians and students use to distinguish the students who have got grade point 5 in all subjects including the elective ones. Against the backdrop of some 7.2 lakh students having passed the SSC exams this year, "we have 4.5 lakh seats in general colleges, 70 thousand in Alia madrasas and 65 thousand in technical colleges. We have only 638 college-affiliated schools, 1175 intermediate colleges, including 10 government ones, 1187 degree colleges with intermediate education and only 1039 Alia madrasas,".

We feel that no society can ensure admission of all in the best colleges or their college of choice. It is a competitive field and only the best students can expect admission into good or better colleges. It is not the question of denying anybody "admission to colleges of their choice" as the quoted report says. Our objective should be to improve the standard of all colleges in terms of equipments and faculty quality. The over-all seats available appears to be quite alright as many will discontinue study for various reasons. Even then all colleges should try to increase seats if possible. Double shifts in colleges like Dhaka college or Notre dame college may in fact deteriorate the quality these few colleges. We do not think this is a good suggestion in case of colleges and universities.

29.06.2008.

President Speaks About Bad Student and Teacher Politics

In the convocation of Dhaka University President Iajuddin Ahmed urged the politicians to build up a knowledge-based society by taking steps against the harmful sides of student politics. "It's time to take steps against the harmful sides of student politics. This is important to build up a knowledge-based society. And to make that happen, sincerity and sympathy of our political parties are needed. I would like to draw attention of the politicians in this regard," he said.

Expressing deep concern over session jams, mainly in the country's public universities, the president said: "Politics is not isolated from society. The universities and other educational institutions are also part of the society, but it is necessary to deeply think about at what level of the education sector the politics will remain." "Despite differences of opinion and ideology among you (the politicians), you have no lack in patriotism. Working for the people's welfare is your aim. So, I request you to think about it (harmful sides of student politics) from the same point of view," said the president.

He stressed the need for formulating rules with caution involving teachers, students, employees and guardians for the development of the country's education. "Though code of conduct, like the other institutions, is not needed for the universities, some cautionary measures should be taken so that people are not deprived of. Such code of conduct should be formulated through democratic process involving teachers, students, employees and the guardians," he told the function. He said the government must ensure the proper utilization of money in universities as the big part of it comes from the people.

About the role of guardians in formulating rules, the president said judgment about a writer is never complete without the readers, and the teachers, though they teach, can not be the lone judges of education. "If the teachers and employees claim that they are the only authorities to determine what is right and what is wrong, then the neutrality will be lost. Such attitude is bad for every institution. The welfare of the society lies in showing respect to the opinion of majority about the values of teachers and education," the president said.

We think the President has raised some pertinent issues. We feel that student and teacher politics in our country did not follow proper lines, these were too divisive and at times destructive. A few hundred students have died in fighting each-other in the last thirty years .We have to regulate the politics of both students and teachers. The UGC or the BIDS or some other agency may be entrusted by the government to study and survey public opinion in these regards and come up with recommendation to regulate student and teacher organizations and their roles.

2.3.2007.

Science Education: Decline in Number Of Students Should Be Investigated

The media has reported that the number of students taking science as their main course at secondary and higher secondary level (pre-university level) have declined considerably over the last several years according to data of the ministry of education. The number of students taking commerce and business courses at that level have increased. In the higher secondary certificate examinations of 1990, the percentage of science examinees was 28.13 percent but in 2008, the figure decreased to 19.14 percent of the total intakes at that level. On the other hand the percentage of business group students showed a significant increase from 19.41 in 1990 to 31.79 this year. The percentage of humanities group students also declined from 52.06 to 48.79 percent during the period.

We know that there was pre-ponderance of humanities students in the past over the science and technical subjects. We did not require so many students in arts, as we call them, or humanities courses in pre-university levels as this also determines the future course of education of the students. As such the decline in humanities students is not a matter of worry at this time. In fact it should come down to about 25 percent and intake in science and business courses should increase. We welcome the progress in intake in business courses. This should further increase in line with the development of the economy and its need.

What is worrying is the decline in science course intake of students. It requires proper investigation by the educational authorities. There is no good reason for decline when the need for engineers, doctors, scientists and technical persons of all sorts is increasing.

25.06.2008.

Teacher Should Be-Non-Partisan

We have seen the article of a Professor of Dhaka University published in a national daily on 15.5.07. We have been surprised at the outburst of the teacher against main-stream Islamic party and student organization who are working as law-abiding organizations for at least last thirty years. He has appealed to the Chief Advisor, Advisor in-charge of education and to joint forces to take action against the Islamic forces of Dhaka University. His demands include the following: Quote Relieve those teachers who were appointed on political considerations and appoint neutral competent teachers but ensure that no pro- jamaat teacher is appointed .----- make lists of all Shibir (the biggest Islamic student organization) ,cadres in all halls (residential hostels) and arrange to have them arrested (no mention of other student organizations).-----it is not only the duty of the government and joint forces to deal with this black force of Jamaat-Shibir (Jamaat-e-Islami is the biggest Islamic party having parliamentary representations in the Parliament always), it is the duty of the of the majority of Dhaka University teachers, employees and students to come forward to save the sacred premises of the University They should organize under the slogan of “save Dhaka University from Jamaat-Shibir” and prepare a list of Jamaat-Shibir workers who are there in various halls, offices and departments. Unquote.

The Professor also gleefully reports that it was decided by all the student organizations that Shibir will remain banned in the Dhaka University. He has no qualms of conscience in this illegal banning of the Shibir

The entire writing is a political propaganda of the worst type. The writer is also the general secretary of the Dhaka University Teachers Association. Do these demands require any comment? Can there be more fascism? Why all these venom against relatively more law-abiding and honest parties of Bangladesh? Whose agenda he is serving? Does it befit a teacher who should see all students alike unless somebody is charged under law?

We hope the government will take note of such incitement against a section of people of this country which the law and the constitution does not permit.

17.05.2007.

SOCIAL ASPECT/WOMEN

Children Languishing In Jails

A report in a national daily says that four hundred children are still languishing in 57 jails across the country in direct violation of the High Court's verdict and the government's directives to shift them to juvenile centres and safe homes. According to a source in social welfare ministry the children are still being kept in prisons although 411 seats in three state-run juvenile development centres and six safe homes remain vacant. A High Court bench comprising Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury and Justice Nizamul Haque Nasim issued the seven-point directive to the government on April 9, 2003 while disposing of a suo moto notice it had issued to the government on January 4 the same year. No juvenile delinquents should be kept in jail and should be transferred to correction homes and other approved places from the jails without any delay, the court directed. The directives have yet to be carried out in their entirety, according to information available with the national taskforce on juvenile justice. The taskforce comprises representatives of 27 government and non-governmental agencies. As the number of juvenile inmates increased gradually this year, the High Court on March 4 issued a fresh suo moto rule on the government to explain why necessary action would not be taken against it for keeping children in jails in violation of the High Court's verdict delivered on April 9, 2003. Following the fresh High Court rule, the Chief Adviser's Office on May 8 asked the authorities concerned to obey the High Court's edict. The home ministry on May 13 ordered all deputy commissioners and superintendents of police to immediately take appropriate measures in accordance with the directives.

The home ministry in June directed the authorities concerned — including district magistrates, prison authorities, police and social welfare officials — to go by seven-point recommendations made by a four-member committee on the rehabilitation of juvenile inmates, said a source. The recommendations include submission of weekly reports on juvenile inmates by the prison authorities, mandatory mentioning of the age of the juveniles in custody, informing concerned probation officers of the accused child, accountability of any officer-in-charge of a police station for increase of the number of juvenile inmates, strengthening the national taskforce and district taskforces to enable them to deliver justice to the juveniles and arranging workshops for magistrates in order to implement the Children Act 1974.

We are appalled at the violation of clear high court directives in the matter. We are at a loss why so much lack of efficiency, speed and co-ordination in vital matters. The secretaries committee headed by cabinet secretary should take all measures to speed up implementation of all decisions of the government, at least more important decisions. A fast track should also be established in most vital issues. We hope the government should take all necessary steps in these regards.

09.07.2007

'Drug Problem: Coordinated Program Needed To Control It

News papers have reported that Director General of the Directorate of Narcotics Control (DNC) Humayun Kabir yesterday said there are over 46 lakh drug addicts in the country and that heroin is the main drug of misuse. Next to heroin, cannabis and Phensidyl are the drugs of choice for the drug addicts while Yaba is a 'fashion drug', he said at a press briefing on the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking to be observed today. The DG quoted the figures from a report of Family Health International.

The drugs seized in the country amounts to only 10 percent of drugs smuggled into the country, he said, adding that some one lakh people are engaged in illegal drug trade and 30 percent of those arrested on charges of drug peddling are women and children. Replying to a question, DG Humayun Kabir said a drug addict spends, on average, Tk 100 on drugs a day, which means over Tk 46 crore is spent on drugs daily. Additional DG Yusuf Ali, Deputy Director Abu Taleb and other high officials were present at the press briefing. The DNC officials said Dhaka is the main den for drug peddlers and abusers. The DNC has arranged a weeklong programme from June 20 to 26 to mark the International Day against Drug Abuse.

We are not sure about the figure as the DG has quoted a foreign source. We do not know why we should not have our own surveys, we should conduct our surveys without delay. We have not given proper attention to this problem as it deserves at state, family, school, college, university, village and social level. To tackle this problem now Teachers, family, media, particularly electronic media have to play serious role. The parents and teachers and local social level leadership have to play most roles. The media must make them aware of their role.

The Directorate of Narcotics Control should of course gear up its enforcement program but more important is rehabilitation program, many more hospital wards and beds should be available for treatment and mental rehabilitation of drug addicts. The police should have arrangement of preventive detention of any drug addict on the request of helpless guardians and then make arrangement for treatment.

27.06.2008.

Health Rights Should Be Ensured

The first National Conference on Health Rights (NCHR), first of its kind in the country, will be held on June 14-15 at Bangladesh Institute for Administration and Management (Biam) auditorium. A total of 51 national and international organizations working on health rights are involved in organizing the two-day conference. The conference will discuss health related rights, deprivation in health care service, model medical organization, country's health scenario, negligence to the women and child health. A photography contest will also be held during the conference. Interested photojournalists have been asked to submit one or more entries for the contest.

We welcome the organizes initiative in organizing such an important conference. The health awareness among most of the people is very little. There is serious problems in all areas of health care particularly in the care of mother and child. Medical attention in the government sector is poor and in the private sector the care is not up to the mark. Most of the doctors in private sector see so many patients in a day that no justice is done to the patients. The health sector has one of the highest budgetary allocation but the doctors and health officials managing the hospitals could not ensure efficiency, care, service or honesty in this sector.

We think that a serious review of the health service as a whole in the interest of the people, particularly the poorer section, is necessary.

02.06.2007.

New ideas Necessary For Protecting Women against Repression

A total of 6054 women were the victims of different forms of violence and repression across the country in last year, revealed a report of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) yesterday. Of them, 1118 women were the victims of physical torture while 1086 were killed. The report also showed that a total of 549 women were raped, 327 were abducted and 324 women and children fell victim to trafficking. The report was revealed at a BMP workshop on 'Obstacles and ways to overcome and resist repression on women' in the city.

Expressing concern over the increasing rate of repression on women even after extensive advocacy against it by different women's rights organizations, the speakers held the existing socio-economic condition of the country responsible for the situation. "Existing social values create discrimination between men and women that works as a barrier to establish human rights for women," said Advocate Masuda Rehana Begum, legal aid secretary of the Central Legal Aid Sub-Committee. While presenting a keynote paper titled 'Public awareness and active initiatives of the administration to be increased to resist repression on women', she said all sectors are dominated by males. Criticizing various provisions in existing laws, Advocate Rehana pointed out that police do not take women's repression cases seriously due to lack of separate laws for domestic violence. She alleged that judges and lawyers also fail to perform their duties in resisting repression on women due to gender biasness. Advocate Rehana called for changes in investigation process and training for doctors to ensure justice in women's repression cases. She also called for establishing one-stop crisis centre in all districts to curb repression on women with the coordination of legal aid service centers. Speaking as special guest Justice Nizamul Huq Nasim laid emphasis on the training of judges, lawyers and public prosecutors to help establish law and justice in the society. He called for ensuring security of the witnesses and encouraging general people to play the role of eyewitness for establishing the rights of women. BMP General Secretary Ayesha Khanom said although there is a development council for women to preserve the rights of women, absence of political will and commitment have halted the establishment of their rights. Over 200 BMP panel of lawyers from 40 districts attended the workshop.

The issue of women repression deserves attention of all sectors of the society and all countries. The ideas placed in the seminar such as changing socio-economic condition, social values regarding women, end of domination of males, end of gender-biased attitude, training of judges, police and lawyers; establishment of crisis centers and legal aid centers are fine and should be considered as far as we can.

However we are all ignoring certain other basic issues relating to women which are hindering progress in this field. We also require to instill in us through education firm moral values which are absent from most parts of the world. Materialism and hedonism have gripped the world destroying finer values and people have become greedy and becoming exploiters. Women also have fallen victim of this hedonist creed. The pornography of all types in the printed materials and in the internet and over-exposure of women by some businesses involved in film and entertainment industry are major reasons for rape, abduction and other serious violence against women. Advertisement has also become largely a kind of pornography. The world has also not taken a serious view of prostitution which is the root cause of abduction and trafficking of children and women.

We feel that these issues have to be addressed by the governments of the world without which we can not really change the situation. We should not shy away from eradicating pornography and prostitution in the name of freedom of profession and modernity. These are not modernity, these are big diseases.

21.5.2007.

Night shelters for street women and children'

Newspapers have reported that INCIDIN Bangladesh, a national research-based private development agency, has called on the caretaker government to allocate adequate funds in the budget to establish safe night shelters for street children. The agency handed over a proposal in this regard to the office of finance and planning adviser yesterday. The proposal was placed by AKM Mustaque Ali, an executive director of INCIDIN Bangladesh. In the proposal, the agency has called on the government to set aside an allocation in the budget of 2007-08 for establishing safe night shelters in Dhaka and all other major cities.

It has categorically mentioned that if the government is willing to utilise the infrastructure already available at rail stations, bus and river terminals, bazars and the establishments which are left unutilised during night time (such as schools) or the khas properties, the budgetary allocation will not require any huge investment in the construction of infrastructure. The allocation will be required to purchase minor logistics such as beds and cabinet, employment of a basic pool of social workers and setting up of a monitoring structure, it added. INCIDIN Bangladesh has already formed a national alliance involving the representatives of government officials, children's organisations, NGOs and government agencies working on the issues concerning street children and development partners. It also offered to extend all sorts of cooperation to any government initiatives in this regard.

We believe INCIDIN Bangladesh has drawn attention to a very serious problem. The problem is acute for not only children but also women without shelter in the cities. The government can not avoid responsibility for this. We think the government should ask the Municipal organizations in the major cities and the municipalities in the district towns to establish shelters as proposed by the INCIDIN Bangladesh. The major NGOs should take up this matter and the government and the NGO Bureau can sit with the major NGOs to sort out issues and co-ordinate.

15.06.2007.

Policy for Orphaned Children of SIDR Cyclone

Children left orphaned by Cyclone Sidr will receive government assistance and the government will formulate a policy in this regard in the first week of March, Rasheda K Choudhury, primary and mass education adviser, said yesterday, newspapers have reported. "A policy is yet to be adopted to assist the Sidr-affected children. We will formulate a policy very soon. We will hold a meeting on March 6 in Barisal for this purpose," said Adviser Rasheda while addressing a views exchange meeting on "United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): Alternative Report". Manusher Jonno Foundation, a non-government organization working for human rights and good governance, organized the meeting at Agargaon in the capital and presented the alternative report. The speakers told the meeting that an estimated 3,500 children had lost their parents during the cyclone and around 1,500 of them cannot be traced now. The government has yet to allocate any funds to safeguard these orphans, they added. The alternative report prepared by Manusher Jonno Foundation is aimed at providing information on existing gaps in national policies and practices while suggesting precise recommendations to improve relations between the state and civil society for a more holistic approach to the state of the children in the country. Bangladesh signed the UNCRC in 1990 and strived to follow the guidelines of the convention and the recommendations of the UNCRC committee for establishing a child-friendly environment," Rasheda Chowdhury said. Human rights activist Dr Hamida Hossain said. "Children from the minority and ethnic groups, street children and the dalits are being deprived of education and our efforts are not enough. We should introduce a uniform education system that would ensure education for all children. Shaheen Anam said. "We have a children act, but it isn't enforced. We will have to implement the children act. Besides, a plan is needed to share information and experience between the government and the NGOs," she also said.

We agree with most of the observations. The orphaned children of Sidr should be properly rehabilitated. The best rehabilitation would be to rehabilitate them with their near or even far relations. The government can give those families taking their responsibility a monthly allowance for next ten years or so till they become adult and can take a job.

We warn about only one thing, not to give the Muslim children for adoption to Non-Muslims or foreigners, in that case their Muslim identity is lost. We should say the same for Non-Muslim children who have been orphaned. It is necessary that they also do not lose their religious identity under forced circumstances. We urge the government to take care of this aspect also which is a part of human right.

26.02.2008

Revival And Improvement Of Public Health Care System

President Iajuddin Ahmed has called upon the physicians and investors not to make the medical services a profit-earning business only, but also ensure healthcare services for the poor. "You have to bring about positive changes in your mindset considering the greater interest and welfare of larger section of the people," he said while laying the foundation stone of the National Heart Foundation-Sylhet here.

The president said healthcare facility is a basic expectation of a nation. But in many cases people are not getting the desired services from a number of public and private hospitals, he said. The government hospitals lack doctors and nurses side by side with financial and infrastructure constraints despite increase of population and emergence of new diseases, he said. Expressing his satisfaction over huge private investment in the health sector, the president said business should not be the only consideration of such investments. Everyone concerned should make it sure that poor people get services from the private hospitals, he said. Urging the doctors to change their urban attitude, Prof Iajuddin said their contribution and vision are very important to ensure healthcare services for all. "We have to keep in mind that medical service is not merely a profession but the best way to serve humanity," he said hoping that being imbued with the spirit, the doctors community would continue to serve the people with devotion, sincerity and responsibility.

We are happy that the President has reminded the physicians their prime duty of service. We want to state in this connection that ninety percent of people can not take the benefit of the costly private clinics. It is our prime need to develop and fully utilize the health facilities created by the government in upazillas and cities. We have all the facilities but these are being mis-manged. Just to give an example, in all private hospitals and clinics they have counters or receptions where you can go and get admitted if you have seats. There is no such arrangement in government hospitals and facilities. We do not know why such an arrangement can not be introduced for the paying seats and 50 percent of the non-paying seats. This will save all of us from a lot of harassment.

We have read elsewhere in an article on Sreelanka that all the hospitals there are in the government sector and they are managed very well. It is a propaganda that nothing can be managed well in the government sector. In the past in the fifties and sixties we have seen good management of so many institutions in the government sector including the Zilla schools, government colleges, Universities. A delegation should visit Sreelanka and assess their system. We hope the speech of the President will be seriously taken by all concerned.

11.5.2007.

Rights Of Indigenous People

Newspapers have reported that speakers at a press conference thursday demanded constitutional recognition of indigenous people. They said the United Nations recognized indigenous people's rights in 1994, but the reality is a bit different in Bangladesh. The press conference was organized jointly by Bangladesh Adibashi Forum and Bangladesh Adibashi Odhikar Andolon at the National Press Club in the city. The speakers demanded immediate implementation of Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, recognition of their traditional ownership of land, and cancellation of setting up eco-parks in places where indigenous people live. They urged the government to recognized indigenous people's right to have their primary education in mother tongue.

In a written statement at the press conference General Secretary of Bangladesh Adibashi Forum Sanjib Drong said rights of indigenous people are recognized by every country of the world. "With high hopes, leaders of indigenous people signed the peace treaty with the government in 1997, now ten years have passed and it is yet to be implemented," he lamented. Due to non-implementation of the treaty, development activities in the area are being hampered, he added. He said to establish good governance in Chittagong Hill Tracts there is no alternative to fullest implementation of the treaty.

Demanding cancellation of establishing eco-parks in Madhupur forest area and other parts of the country, Sanjib said indigenous people's right to live peacefully should not be sacrificed under any circumstances. He also urged the government to observe the International Indigenous Day on August 9 nationally and announced their eight-day-long programme to observe the day. This year, the theme of the day is 'Indigenous people's right to their mother tongue and culture'.

We Have full sympathy for the rights of all people, all kinds of minorities and deprived population. The basic issue is that of human rights and rule of law which should be ensured for all. If these are not ensured, the rights of all, whether a part of majority or minority community are affected.

We urge the government to look into the genuine demands of all the indigenous people and implement the provisions of international protocol in this regard, if some provisions have not yet been implemented.

We also remind all that the issued of indigenous people sometime become an issue of propagananda and political gains when selfish groups under various covers get involved in such issues , more for ulterior motives as we have seen in South Sudan, Chittagong Hill Tract and many other areas. We request our indigenous community leaders to be careful about this.

28.07.2007

River Erosion Problem: Bangladesh Requires An Agency for Handling This Yearly Issue

Newspapers have reported that more than 5,000 people at six villages in Lalmonirhat sadar upazila in the north of Bangladesh have become homeless in the last five days due to erosion by the River Darla. At least 120 dwelling houses, a mosque, a temple and a vast track of crop lands were eroded during the period. The erosion-hit villages are Badaitari, Mogholhat, Kurul, Megharam, Bongram and Itapota. The affected people have taken shelter on different roads, embankments and on the high lands. Many villagers are passing days with grave anxiety as the river is rapidly eroding houses and crop fields, local people said. Mogholhat union parishad complex, BDR camp and some government establishments in the upazila were also facing threat of river erosion. Every monsoon, Darla turns turbulent due sudden rush of hilly water and play havoc at the villages, locals said. But the authorities did not pay heed to their appeal, he lamented. The local people stressed that the authorities concerned should immediately take necessary steps to check river erosion.

We know this is a perennial problem in some parts of Bangladesh by the side of the banks of the big rivers and also some other rivers. As we are seeing no agency has acted to tackle the issue. At least one hundred thousand people suffer ever year and most of them become rootless. We have seen in the past some people have proposed for formation of an agency for dealing with all aspects of river erosion problem, containing erosion, relief and rehabilitation .At the least a co-coordinating agency is needed for quick co-ordination of all related agencies, district authorities, ministry of relief, ministry of agriculture, Ministry of water and flood control, ministry of land, Ministry of health. But no action has been taken. This is an urgent need, if necessary the Bangladesh Red crescent society can be made the agency on behalf of the government giving them adequate administrative and financial powers.

23.06.2008.

Social Movement Against Smoking Needed

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed has called for launching a social movement to make the people aware about the hazards of smoking. He made the call when a delegation of Adhunik, led by its founder-president national professor Dr Nurul Islam, called on him at his office on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day.

The chief adviser said, "Smoking is bad for all -- oneself, family, society and the nation. It does not bring any good to anyone." As much as the social movement would be strengthened, achieving the goal would be easier, he said. He also called for involving the NGOs working in rural areas with the Adhunik campaign. Responding to a proposal of the delegation to impose more taxes on tobacco for discouraging smoking, the chief adviser said he would discuss the issue with the ministries concerned. He also said that measures would be taken to prevent smoking in public places.

Smoking is so much dangerous for health but we are unable to eliminate it or even reduce it drastically. Every day new young people are initiated to smoking. Tax increase has not solved the problem in the past, heavy taxation leads to smuggling. Indeed a social movement is the solution. A promise in writing may also be made mandatory for all new appointees in all organizations that they will not smoke, if they do they will lose job.

A social movement incorporating all teachers of schools and Madrasas, the Imams of masjids, ngo workers should be launched. The teachers can play a big part in this campaign but they have to give-up smoking themselves. Imams can play a much bigger part as most Ulama have said smoking is an act close to prohibition. It is an act which entails sin. Some Ulama think it prohibited.

We request the government to call a convention of all the aforesaid groups and facilitate the launch of a social movement.

02.06.2007

Solution of The Problem Of Ultra Poor

Noted economists and development experts at an international workshop on Monday suggested expansion of social safety-net programmes and creation of short-term employment opportunities to help ultra-poor people cross poverty line. The workshop on 'Dynamics of Food and Cash Transfers: Policy Discussion on the Results of Food and Cash Efficacy Study' was organized by Economic Relations Division (ERD) and World Food Programme (WFP) in cooperation with UK's Department for International Development (DFID) at a city hotel. The discussion at the workshop was based on the findings from the study titled 'Relative efficacy of food and cash in enhancing livelihood of the extreme poor' conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and commissioned by WFP.

"Food poverty still remains in the country at an alarming level," said renowned economist Prof Wahiduddin Mahmood, former adviser to a caretaker government. Referring to a Household Expenditures Survey (HES) of 2004-2005, he said it showed that poverty in the country declined much rapidly, but in terms of calorie intake, it has not declined that way. The expenditure level of people might have increased in non-food sectors, Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud said, adding that more food transfer under the safety-net programmes therefore is a preferable option other than the cash.

Executive director of Power and Participation Research Centre, strongly recommended introduction of innovative ways of addressing the poverty reduction issues. The safety-net programmes may also include food for social forestry, earthwork in making homesteads or public works depending on the eco-system of various regions, and incorporate effectively the training programme for changing food habits, he noted. The economist said the pockets of poverty like monga-hit areas in North Bengal could be identified before initiating any programme, while nutrition issue of the pre-school children should be incorporated in the poverty reduction strategies. Dr Quazi Mesbahuddin Ahmed, former member of Bangladesh Planning Commission, suggested for combination of food and cash in the social safety-net programmes saying that cash is the best form in certain circumstances and food is the best option in some other circumstances.

Speaking as chief guest at the inaugural session, ERD Secretary Aminul Islam Bhuiyan said the major challenge for food security of Bangladesh is 56 million people of the country who are still below the calorie-intake-based poverty line. "Of them, 27 millions are living in extreme poverty, and they are also severely undernourished. This means our success in the availability of food coexists with very high prevalence of under-nourishment and malnutrition," he added.

Presenting a study Dr Akhter Ahmed and Dr Marie Ruel of IFPRI said Income-Generating Vulnerable Group Development (IGVGD) and Food Security Vulnerable Group Development (FSVGD) are the most effective programmes in terms of increasing household income, while Food for Asset Creation (FFA) is the best targeted programme and Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP) has the largest effect on savings. They recommended more efficient and timely cash distributions and concluded that fortified atta (flour) is more effective than rice in safety-net programmes because of its nutrition values.

We note with concern the level of low calorie intake and continuation of serious hardcore poverty among about 15percent of our population. We have to re-think our strategy. Apart from the suggestions of the economists we propose a new approach in micro-finance. Credit can not remove hardcore poverty. For that either the period of repayment must be much longer or a grant element should be introduced in the credit package (let us say 50 percent loan given should be grant), the grant portion has to be financed from a charity fund established by the NGOs for poverty eradication. Islamic NGOs can do it in a much better way by integrating Zakat, general charity and waqf with micro- credit program. From Zakat, charity and waqf proceeds, 50 percent fund can be given on grant basis (the percentage may differ if so felt), even administrative expenses can be met from the charity fund. We hope this procedure can quickly reduce hard-core poverty.

12.09.2007.

Student Protesting Sister's Insult Fighting For Life: Eve-Teasing Must Stop

It has been reported in the press that Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology student Mehedi Hasan Rana, who was beaten up by some students of Asian University on May 20, has been fighting for life in a city hospital for the last 10 days. Rana's father Ali Haider Chowdhury has alleged that though 10 days already elapsed since the attack, Asian University authorities are yet to take any measures against the students who beat up his son. Ali Haider also alleged that the students who attacked both his daughter and son have been threatening the family not to pursue the matter any further. Rana was mercilessly beaten up after he went to Asian University on May 20 to save his sister Rumana studying in the BBA department of the university. The students had allegedly cornered Rumana in an elevator, earlier the same day, and verbally and physically assaulted her.

Severely injured Rana was admitted to the Central Hospital and put on life support. He was shifted to Apollo Hospital on May 26 when his condition deteriorated further and is currently being treated in the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital. Hospital staff said Rana's condition is very critical. Meanwhile on May 25, as a rumour spread of Rana's death, several hundred students from both the universities locked in a fierce clash that left over 25 injured. Both universities have been shut down till May 30 since the clash. Ali Haider has expressed his disappointment with the role of the police as well as that of the university authorities. Ali Haider also alleged, "When my daughter went to submit a complain about her assault, the register of Asian University tore up her letter of complaint on May 20." He also said that when he went to Uttara police station to file a case police did not accept it as a case but as a general diary.

We are appalled at this development which is the result of eve-teasing in an university. We have observed that harassing girl students is a major cause of brawls in some educational institutions. We feel all universities and colleges should develop a code to deal with this. Teachers, media, Ulama can do a lot in mobilizing opinion against this mis-conduct.

31.05.2008

Violations Of Human Rights Should Stop

AFP has reported from London that Amnesty International has made serious criticism of the United States accusing it of trampling on human rights, and using the world as "a giant battlefield" in its "war on terror." The war in Iraq and the politics of fear being spread by the administration of US President George W. Bush around the globe were fuelling deep international divisions, the human rights group charged. Washington was also guilty of "breathtakingly shameless" double speak, claiming to be promoting human rights while at the same time brazenly flouting international law, the London-based group charged in its 2007 annual report.

Last year, evidence revealed how "the US administration treated the world as one giant battlefield for its 'war on terror', kidnapping, arresting, arbitrarily detaining, torturing and transferring suspects from one secret prison to another across the world with impunity," she added. Hundreds of people have now been transferred by the US and its allies through these secret renditions to countries such as Syria, Jordan and Egypt. Yet Washington remains deaf to pleas to shut down its remote military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where many of these detainees have ended up, held without charge or trial, virtually incommunicado.

If Iraq was to escape from the cycle of violence and bloodshed and avoid its "apocalyptic prognosis", the Iraqi government and the US-led coalition had to set clear human rights benchmarks such as disarming the militia and reforming the police. The international community, led by the US, had also squandered the opportunity to build an effective state based on human rights and the rule of law in Afghanistan, the group said. The US "is unrepentant about the global web of abuse it has spun in the name of counter-terrorism," Amnesty Secretary General Irene Khan wrote.

We think Amnesty report is a painful narration of human rights abuses taking place around the world. We believe the maintenance of law and order and rule of law can go together. It is indeed tough but there is no escape from this. Unfortunately it has gone into heads of most people that in handling crime and terrorism law can not be fully followed. This theory has no basis. It is a sad commentary that humanity is unable to devise ways to tackle terrorism and crime and also maintain human rights. This thinking has come from human arrogance, disbelief in moral principles. As a result the people in the field, the soldiers and police and their officers are committing all kinds of abuse. A new thinking is necessary in this regard to uphold principles while fighting crime and terrorism. This should be the aim even if it means more difficulties and more time. We know that violation of human rights and rule of law also can not solve the problem of terrorism unless root causes such as foreign policy misadventures and poverty are not eliminated. The global capitalism and imperialism has given no attention to that.

25.5.2007

Violence Against Women In Workplaces : How To Deal ?

Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, Dhaka has reported that more than 90 per cent of working women both in rural and urban areas have been experienced by various kinds of gender violence including, verbal, physical, mental and sexual at their workplaces. This was revealed by a study styled 'Gender-based violence at the workplace : Causes and consequences' saying 92.3 per cent working women of urban areas and 88.3 per cent of rural areas have been badly treated by various types of violence by their male counterparts. The study was conducted recently among the urban and rural working women under the initiative of Social Science Research Council of the Planning Commission under planning ministry. The study said huge number of adolescent girls and women were being sexually abused in their workplace but it was the most hidden and underreported from violence as there is a tendency to deny the incident. Most of the women do not talk about it in order to protect herself from shame and stigma as well as to protect the perpetrator who is usually a colleague or supervisor, it said. Twenty-three per cent of women told about the existence of verbal abuse and a major portion of 30 per cent have told about mental abuse, said the survey. Some of the working women said they were bound to respond to indecent proposals by their immediate supervisors or male colleagues to keep their service.

Sometime women are trapped by immediate superior when they work at night and they are also sexually abused in transport, the study said. Only 13.3 per cent of women in the rural area and 12.3 per cent of women in the urban area said their employers' behavior was good, whereas one-third of the respondent opined that employers' behavior was bad. Almost 38 per cent of the working women of the study areas opined that patriarchal mentality is the root cause for occurring violence at the workplace. The study suggested formulating a national plan of action for preventions of all forms of violence against women. It also said to develop a women-rights-based national policy framework with clear strategies to prevent and protect women against sexual abuse, including a strong monitoring and evaluation component. The study gave a set of recommendations including carrying out a broad advocacy campaign to raise community awareness and provide education to girls and women about their rights to physical and psychological integrity to prevent violence at the workplace. It also said enforcement of laws that protect women from violence must receive priority. The legal and the judicial system must address impunity by vigorously investigating reports of violence and ensuring that perpetrators are appropriately punished, it added.

We feel extremely perturbed by the result of the study conducted by credible organizations. It is unfortunate for a nation where moral values should have ruled. It shows that our education system has some weakness in producing morally oriented persons, otherwise how the scene could be this? Our religious leaders have not been able to inspire people towards moral values as much as we want through their teaching and Khutbas. It may be issue of the quality of their Khutba (speech in the Masjid on Friday before prayer). The Study has also given a number of good suggestions, we urge the government to look into these recommendations and take appropriate steps.

02.07.2008

Women And girls must be protected

BSS, the national news agency of Bangladesh has reported from New York, quoting an UN official, that the states which have signed on to the United Nations international bill of rights for women must continue to press for an end to gender-based violence, a senior UN official on Monday told experts gathering in New York to evaluate compliance with the treaty. Regrettably, violence against women and girls remain unabated in whatever form and manifestation, depriving them of the full enjoyment of their human rights," said Rachel Mayanja, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of Issues and Advancement of Women, according to the text of her remarks. Mayanja was addressing the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, a panel comprising 23 international experts on women's issues, which opened a two-week session at the UN Headquarters in New York. Established in 1982, the committee tracks the status of women in countries that have ratified the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Currently, the convention has 185 states parties.

These are very good intentions but these require serious action. It is not enough for the world to provide education and economic prosperity to the women in which direction many countries are working. The protection of women is a very different and difficult matter. It would require international recognition and high priority for incorporation of morality and ethics in education, de-emphasizing money and material acquisition, giving high value to family, elimination as far as possible of drugs and alcohol, elimination of prostitution which is a big cause of women trafficking and their abduction. The modern countries do not want to listen to such an agenda. Then you can not have proper safety for women who constitute half of humanity.

17.02.2007

Women Development Policy Without Violating Quranic Laws: A Right Demand

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday demanded implementation of the National Women Development Policy without violating the Quranic laws. Hailing the government for announcing the policy, they said it should be implemented in the light of the Quranic laws. The roundtable titled 'Women's Rights in Islam' was organised by Nari Odhikar Andolan at the National Press Club in the capital yesterday. "If we were given the rights that were given by Islam to us then there was no need to fight for any policy for development," said former principal of Titumir Government College Prof Chemon Ara while presiding over the roundtable.

"Islam has given us proper honour, sometimes more than men, but we do not get that honour in our familial, social and political life," she added. The speakers said women are repressed at home and outside due to lack of practice of Islamic laws in personal and social life. They said development and empowerment of women are needed for the welfare of all mankind irrespective of their faith. The rights given to women by Islam and law in all respects should be ensured by the society and the government. They also condemned the vulgarization of culture and entertainment in a section of media. These are neither culture nor entertainment, these are incitement to criminality in human mind and destruction of human values. The roundtable was addressed among others by Hosne Ara Begum, associate professor of Eden Girls' College and University, Dr Razia Sultana, associate professor of Buet, and Khandaker Ayesha Khatun, principal of Al-Quraner Chhayatal Academy.

We support the women point of view that the society by and large, despite their glorification of women right, has not given women their due rights. In the past they were deprived even from proper education, social participation and they were also deprived from their inheritance. In this context there is a need for a policy in this regard which will be a guideline for action by all the ministries in their action. What was wrong was careless formulation of some sections which easily could be mis-applied or misinterpreted as against the wise and divine law of Islam. It is necessary to amend a few sections to remove confusion. The women's demand in the seminar and committee of the Ulama's some of the recommendations will be helpful to the government in this regard.

07.05.2008.

OTHERS

Muslim News Coverage Negative: Irresponsible Media Role'

Researchers looking at the way British Muslims are represented by the media say they have found that most coverage is negative in tone. A Cardiff University team behind the study looked at nearly 1,000 newspaper articles from the past eight years. Two-thirds focused on terrorism or cultural differences, and much of it used words such as militancy, radicalism and fundamentalist. The research was commissioned by Channel Four's Dispatches. Dr Paul Mason, a member of the team, said the team looked at three areas. They carried out a statistical analysis looking at types of stories and the way Muslims were described and the language used, the photographs used alongside the stories and they analysed the types of case studies used.

He said: "We looked at both nouns and adjectives and the way in which British Muslims were described. "And we found the highest proportion of nouns used were about things like extremism, suicide bombers, militancy, radicalism - which accounted for over 35% of the adjectives used about British Muslims - fanatic, fundamentalist - those kinds of languages were used. "And Islam was portrayed or constructed in the language as dangerous or backward or as a threat," he said. The team found that since the attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States and 7 July 2005 in London there had been an increase in stories about British Muslims and this peaked to more than 4,000 in 2006. Mr Mason added: "What you have to be careful of here is to watch the kind of generalization of the very, very small number of people that are involved in political violence of any kind and the generalization about Islam which is carried out by the newspapers. "So following 9/11 and 7/7 of course there is a perceived threat from the public and the public are concerned about political violence. "But it is wholly wrong to make what the newspapers do in the generalization of those who carry out public violence to the whole of Islam and the whole of the British Muslim community." He said there were concerns that journalists and editors may have sought to appeal to their own readership about some perceived threat to British unity or values. "You get these inaccurate stories about this threat of there is going to be more mosques than churches, which is a complete nonsense" There are roughly 900 mosques and there are 42,000 churches, so this is a ridiculous report."

We feel deeply worried at this type of biased reporting in Britain. The situation in Europe and US is probably worse. A similar investigation should be launched there. In some Muslim countries even Muslim organizations get bad press, in an unfair manner. We hope the report will be an eye-opener for all and the Press agencies and media in general should review its position and free itself from all sorts of exaggerated bias.

10.07.2008

Nazrul Researcher Shahabuddin Ahmad Passes Away

Shahabuddin Ahmed, an exponent of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, passed away at Dhaka Medical College Hospital early yesterday at the age of 71. Shahabuddin, also a journalist, litterateur and researcher, was the editor of magazines published by Islamic Foundation and Nazrul Academy and of the Daily Mujadded. He wrote over 20 books, 11 of which were on poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

We mourn the death of this great Nazrul researcher. We have come to know that he did not get proper medical attention after he went into coma after a stroke. This is unfortunate. We feel that such scholars should get the highest medical attention possible in the country without payment if their families can not bear such expenditure. He could get better attention if he could be treated in CMH.

We feel that the present government hospitals do not have arrangement for art of the state treatment. We also feel that more specialized hospitals should be set up in the government sector to meet the need. This will help us all and it will be possible then to get best specialized treatment in the country in the government sector.

18.05.2007.

Secularism Gone Amuck: World Should Protest Denial Of Religious Right

International press has reported that, Turkey's top court decided to annul constitutional amendments that would allow women to wear the Muslim headscarf at Turkish universities. Before that the ban was lifted with the passage of the amendments in the constitution by 80 percent, or 411 of the deputies in Parliament so that wearing of hijab or head-scarf could be allowed. President Abdullah Gül ratified the amendments. Thereafter the ban was withdrawn by the government.

We are appalled at the decision of the Turkish court. This is a very peculiar secularism given birth by Mostafa kamal Pasha who was a dictator, a follower of western civilization and who took extreme actions against Islamic teachings well-known to Allah. He was like Akbar the Moghol king of India in Turkey Akbar is known for his strong-arm policy against Islam.

This is a political judgment as we see sometimes in some other countries. We are sorry to say that this Turkish court doesn't understand anything of secularism or religious freedom or democracy. Those who are students of political science and writer and teacher of political science know that hijab in no way is anti -secular or anti-democratic. This is the highest level of so-called fundamentalism that ultra-secularists are showing in Turkey, France and some other western countries. But as history shows they will fail and hijab movement will get stronger around the world because oppression only strengthens the resolve of people. We draw attention of all democratic and human right organizations to this situation.

06.06.2008.