

# A Study on

## Media Influence on Public Policy in Bangladesh: Investment Climate Perspective

BY



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**\*Disclaimer:** The opinion, observation and analysis expressed in the study are authors' own and in no way reflect the views of the organizations they worked for.

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## ABSTRACT

This paper has tried to find out whether newspapers in Bangladesh have any influence on policy formulation, revision and improvement in respect to investment climate. Reviewing two Bangla and two English newspapers for three fiscal years, we found that newspapers have strong interest in policy related issues. They have covered different important sectors with the policy perspective. But the relationship between newspapers' role and policy direction is not very strong. Newspapers heavily emphasize informative news items since disseminating information is their primary objective, but policy related advocacy and analyses are still low in the newspapers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Media is well recognized as a public agenda setter. It is now widely believed that media, both print and electronic, has impact on public policy formulation and revision. So, one basic question needs to be answered first. This is: Why Media Matters?

To put it in simple way, we find three reasons for that media matters.

Firstly, media frames what people think about issues. Media accounts act as a shortcut for people to learn about issues. So media framing determines how issues will be received and internalized.

Secondly, media influences public opinion by exposing the public to particular ideas and *not* exposing them to other ideas. By selecting particular stories for publication, media selects a range of opinion choices that will be made available to readers.

Thirdly, media matters because stories can be used by policymakers to justify policy positions. Media accounts often masquerade as research and policymakers can employ these accounts to bolster pet policy projects. Media matters because reports and analysis can be used by policymakers to promote a political agenda (by creating a "problem") and then to justify a favored political "solution." Policymakers take shortcuts when it comes to understanding issues. Human beings have a narrow capacity for complexities, so a tiny fraction of what we hear and know influences our behavior.

Again, one of the most important claims about news in the mass media is the agenda-setting hypothesis. The idea is that editors and journalists have a large degree of freedom in deciding what is newsworthy and what is not, and these choices influence the perception of citizens about which issues are relevant and to what extent. Cohen [1963] stated it eloquently: the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.

Some, however, argued that the exploitation of agenda-setting power is potentially one of the most harmful behaviors by news media, especially if they use this power to suppress information. The reason is that it is difficult for consumers to distinguish the scenario. Suppose: we did not see any news about X today because nothing important happened regarding X. From the scenario we did not see any news about X today because, although something important happened, the media decided not to publish it.

Theoretical models by Anderson and McLaren [2005], Bernhardt, Krasa and Polborn [2006], Besley and Prat [2006] and Puglisi [2004] incorporate precisely this source of media bias, and show how this can affect public decisions and possibly lead to sub-optimal ones.

On the other hand, it is difficult to fully assess the impact of the media on public policy formulation or revision in Bangladesh or elsewhere due to several reasons.

First, the “media” is not a single entity, but a name given to many competing entities, which may have different and counteracting impacts.

Second, many forces attempt to manipulate the media, including government officials and interest groups. So it is difficult to say how much independent influence the media have. Some argue that it is a conduit for the government, industry, labor, or any other interest groups wanting to stir up public support for policies. And so, it cannot be said to have fully independent impact.

Third, its impact can be either direct -- on those who make the policies -- or indirect -- influencing who gets elected or otherwise selected to make the policies. It is difficult to assess the combination of direct plus indirect impact.

Finally, the impact of the media may vary substantially from issue to issue, time to time, and nation to nation. No overall assessment may be possible.

Nevertheless, an assessment of the media impact on public policy in different areas deserves great attention. In fact, the role of mass media in policy-making and policy-response over investment climate issues has been widely recognized in many countries of the world. But, 'mass media-public policy- investment climate' inter-linkages in Bangladesh are still largely unexplored. As growing debate on investment climate and public policies have taken place in different media in Bangladesh, a close look at the nature of debate and inter-relationship is considered worthy of note.

## **2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Entrepreneurship is increasing in popularity as a tool for stimulating economic growth and development. And creating a climate in which entrepreneurs and their businesses can thrive is crucial to increasing entrepreneurial activities and success within a country. There is an increasing need to understand what factors influence this climate from the perspective of business owners as well as society. A favorable investment climate encourages businesses to improve efficiency and productivity in order to increase revenues and capital available for investment. It also gives investors confidence in the market and encourages them to invest more capital.

But gaps in investment climate have to be addressed through appropriate policy-making and policy-response. Government has to introduce new policies or adjust existing policies to improve investment climate. This may be initiated from decision makers or resulted by advocacy of other stakeholders like business chambers/associations, civil society bodies and development partners. Through different mass media, concerns of various stakeholders are disseminated and public opinion is mobilized for certain policies and actions. As a public policy actor itself, the media may also advocate for one set of reforms and discourage some others.

The nature and extent of media coverage on an investment climate issue may ultimately influence the related policy outcome.

Although numerous researches have taken place on many issues of investment climate like regulatory regimes, sectoral or product-specific needs and implications, government role, critical inputs and challenges for entrepreneurs, the mass media-public policy-investment climate inter-linkages still remain largely unexplored. An empirical study on whether and how investment climate decisions are influenced by or through media coverage can provide critical insights into utilizing media to maximize benefits from a pro-active investment climate agenda. In other words, the study would review if Bangladesh media play their agenda setting role in investment related issues and if not, what factors hold them back.

### **3. STUDY OBJECTIVES AND SCOPES**

Defining investment climate precisely is difficult. But one useful definition is the “policy, institutional, and behavioral environment, both present and expected, that influences the returns, and risks, associated with investment” (Stern 2002b). This environment is generally seen as having three main features: macroeconomic conditions, governance, and infrastructure. Macroeconomic factors include such issues as fiscal, monetary, and exchange rate policies and political stability. Governance relates to government interactions with business, which typically mean regulation and corruption, both of which affect the costs of starting and running a business. Infrastructure refers to the quality and quantity of physical infrastructure such as power, transport, and telecommunications. More broadly, it can also refer to financial infrastructure such as banking or access to finance. The need for investment climate reform in Bangladesh, a country where 42% of its 140 million people live in extreme poverty, is severe. Weak infrastructure, corruption, and the overall regulatory burden were cited in the 2003 World Bank Investment Climate Assessment of Bangladesh as the largest barriers to private sector development. These findings are also reflected in IFC (International Finance Corporation)’s Doing Business Report 2009 (Bangladesh ranks 110/181 for ease of doing business, 175/181 for registering property, 105/181 for trading across borders, 132/181 for employing workers, 114/181 for dealing with Construction Permits, 178/181 for enforcing Contracts and 106/181 for closing a Business. Such an investment climate is poorly positioned to drive the significant private sector contribution needed for sustained poverty reduction. The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) recognizes that serious constraints to its investment climate exist.

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) and The World Bank have conducted the pioneer investment climate survey in Bangladesh jointly in late 2002. The bulk of the investment climate gaps identified in the survey are still relevant. While identifying major constraints to business operation, nearly 80 percent interviewees identified energy and about 60 percent identified corruption, 50 percent plus interviewees blamed tax administration and cost of financing followed by more than 40 percent who pointed to economic policy uncertainty, anomalies and incongruities in areas of customs & trade, and access to financing<sup>1</sup>.

Many of these issues have appeared in newspapers in different times in different forms. But, the extent of media coverage in different areas, issues and subjects are still unexplored. It is

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<sup>1</sup> The World Bank and Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (2003): *Improving the Investment Climate in Bangladesh*, Pilot Investment Climate Assessment, The World Bank, Washington DC.

also not clear whether the media is giving significant attention to the subjects related with investment climate, and whether the media is creating space for public debate on these issues.

For any long-term improvements in the business environment, businesses need to be motivated to come forward with common interests, business associations must effectively advocate to the policymakers for corresponding reforms, and government agencies must be equipped to implement reforms in order to provide businesses with optimized services. Simultaneously, the media also need to be more focused, informed and intellectually sound to engage in such debates for business environment improvement.

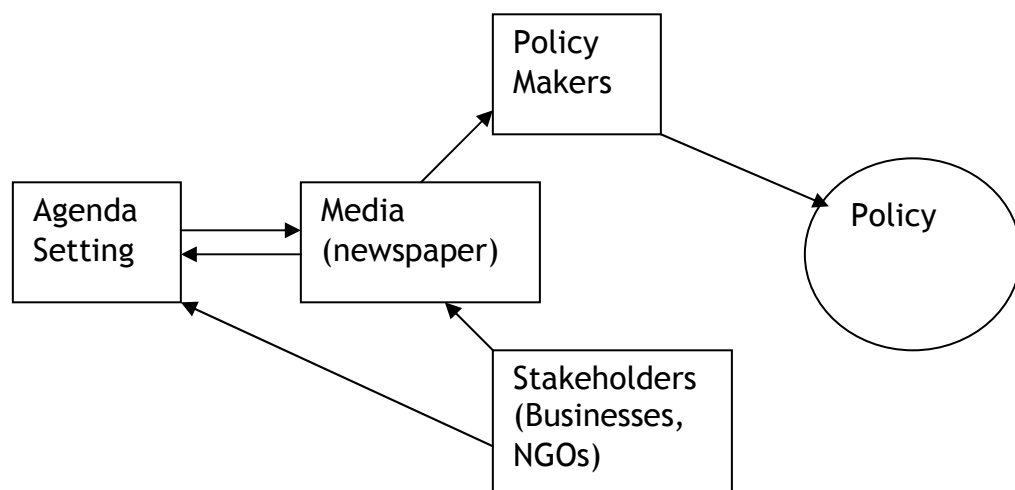
In fact, investment climate encompasses a wide array of fields where policy-making and policy-response by government actors are needed. These fields are interlinked and mutually supportive. So, as gains in one field may benefit other fields, loss in one field may also cause erosion in others. Investment climate improvements have to essentially involve consistent policy adjustments integrated as a common process.

Taking this scenario into consideration, challenges are manifold in Bangladesh. Here, stakeholders have to advocate for reforms and adjustments to have a win-win investment climate in place for all economic operators. Then policy gains have to be defended across regime change and economic trends. Again, gaps abound between policies and their implementation. And, policy options have to be fitted with local conditions.

Faced with resistance from vested quarters, those actions have to be pursued through different channels of policy input including mass media. The study tries to explore the conditions, extent and processes through which media coverage influences or can influence better policy decisions.

In this connection, the study attempts to answer the following broad question:  
**Whether and how media coverage influences concerned policy decisions?**

*Flowchart: What we want to see*



## 4. STUDY METHODOLOGY

Like any other standard study or research, the present study has reviewed some of the relevant literatures and goes through data analysis. For data analysis, a relevant set of data has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data has been generated through media content analysis. It is important to note that the media content analysis is the unique feature of the current study. The content analysis provides the ground for selecting and prioritizing the issues for the study to focus on.

We also analyzed relevant policy documents. These include:

- Export Policy Order 2006-09
- Import Policy Order 2006-09
- Industrial Policy 2005
- Unlocking the Potential: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction (1<sup>st</sup> PRSP of Bangladesh)

Discussion has been held with several policymakers, business leaders and media people to extract perception regarding media role of policy influence.

### Literature Review

It is already agreed that the media shapes public opinion and influences public policy. The theory of agenda setting is built around the idea that mass media can influence the importance attached to different issues by readers and viewers.<sup>2</sup> As Lippmann [1922] notes, news provided by the mass media are a primary source of information about public affairs, and sometimes the only one. Beginning with the seminal contribution by McCombs and Shaw [1972] on Chapel Hill voters, a host of empirical studies have searched for the presence of agenda-setting effects, i.e. of a causal relationship that goes from the coverage of issues on the mass media to the priorities of the public. Experimental evidence, such as that provided by Iyengar, Kinder and Peters [1982], lends the strongest support to this hypothesis. Importantly, the choice of the topics covered by the media need not be politically neutral. There are several ways that media sources can try to use their agenda-setting power to favor one political party or the other.

Ansolabehere, Lessem and Snyder [2006] use panel data to study the political orientation of endorsements of U.S. newspapers. They find that while in the 1940s and in the 1950s Republican candidates received more endorsements, this advantage has constantly declined in subsequent decades: in the 90s the authors and a slight Democrats -- lead (10%) in the average endorsement choice. They also find an upward trend in the average propensity to provide endorsement for candidates already in office. In the 1940s incumbent candidates received 60% of the total endorsements, but this figure has increased to about 90% today.

Fridkin Kahn and Kenney [2002] analyze how large newspapers covered 67 Senatorial campaigns across three election years, as a function of their explicit endorsement choices. Through human-based content analysis they code the tone of the articles and find that newspapers systematically gave a more favorable coverage to endorsed incumbents.

Lott and Hassett [2004] find an overall liberal bias in the U.S. press. They study a panel of 389 U.S. newspapers from 1991 to 2004 (and a sub-sample of them from 1985 to 2004), focusing on economic news, i.e. looking at how newspapers cover the release of official data on a set of

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<sup>2</sup> This section is heavily extracted from Larcinese, V., Puglisi R., and Snyder, J. M. Jr [2007].

economic indicators. Their identification strategy is based on the fact that newspapers can provide a more positive or negative account of the same statistical figure, depending on the party affiliation of the incumbent president. Lott and Hassett find that there are, on average, between 9.6% and 14.7% fewer positive stories when the incumbent president is a Republican, controlling for the economic data being released. Differently from our paper, the main focus of Lott and Hassett is on the tone of coverage and the absolute average political position of U.S. newspapers. They do not estimate different positions for different newspapers.

Groseclose and Milyo [2005] also find a liberal bias in the U.S. press. They trace out which think tanks are quoted by each media outlet considered in their sample. The political leaning of each think tank is recovered by looking at the political position (ADA score) of members of the U.S. Congress who quote the same think tank in a non-negative way. The political leaning of each outlet can then be calculated by looking at the frequency with which the various think tanks are quoted. Groseclose and Milyo also find that all the outlets in their sample except Fox News, Special Report and the Washington Times are located to the left of the average Congress member. At the same time, all outlets but one are located between the average Democrat and the average Republican Congressmen, hence displaying a high degree of centrism.

In a similar fashion, Gentzkow and Shapiro [2007] provide another measure of media bias based on similarities between the language used by media outlets and congressmen. Exploiting the Congressional Record, they identify partisan words and phrases i.e., those expressions that show the largest difference in the frequency of use between Democratic and Republican representatives. They then measure how frequently these expressions appear in different newspapers. They conclude that the partisan bias of newspapers depends mainly on consumers, ideological leaning and far less on the identity of owners.

An account of the agenda setting behavior of the New York Times in the period 1946-1997 is provided by Puglisi [2006], who finds that the Times displays Democratic partisanship, with some watchdog aspects. Puglisi finds that, during presidential campaigns, the New York Times systematically gives more coverage to Democratic topics (civil rights, health care, labor and social welfare) when the incumbent president is a Republican. The New York Times displays a more symmetric type of watchdog behavior after 1960: in the last four decades, during presidential campaigns the Times also gives more coverage to the typically Republican issue of Defense when the incumbent president is a Democrat, and less so when the incumbent is a Republican.

To be specific for Bangladesh, Biswas [2007] argued that the news media's commercial orientation, the practice of paid reporting, a lack of developmental knowledge among journalists, and a lack of skill in development journalism are identified as challenges for Bangladeshi developmental NGOs in their relations with media. From the other side, journalist's particular challenges are NGOs' lack of transparency, the rarity of skilled and proactive media relations in the organizations, and NGO chiefs' close relationships with newspaper editors or owners. He also observes that the commercial orientation of mainstream mass media, both broadcast and print, often appears as a challenge for developmental NGOs. The commercial interests of news media dictate what type of news will be presented.



## 4.2 Media Content Analysis

The research team selected four leading national dailies (two Bangla and two English) for media content analysis. These are: Prothom Alo (Bangla), Jugantor (Bangla), The Daily Star (English), and The Financial Express (English).

The electronic media were excluded from the list due to their nature of not getting to the depth of issues and absence of documentation of electronic news. There is almost no public record or storage of electronic news. Electronic media are also considered to be event-based and not an issue-based medium for public consumption.

The selection of four newspapers is based on some rationales. The first consideration was circulation. Prothom Alo, the largest circulated newspaper in Bangladesh, and The Daily Star, the largest circulated English daily, naturally figured in the selection. Jugantor was chosen because it has the second largest circulation among the Bangla dailies. Secondly, as the study wanted to look at the economic and business angles of news, the Financial Express was chosen. Thirdly, all the four newspapers have already crossed 10 years of publication. Moreover, these four newspapers are also considered more seriously by the policymakers and readers.

Three financial years have been covered for the newspaper content analysis. These are: 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07. The total time period of coverage is 36 months (July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2007).

The selection of the time period is also relevant for investment climate analysis. In fact, the debate on linking investment climate and different policies and regulations started to be more visible in the media for the last 6/7 years. The international financial institutions and other organizations also started to stress investment climate in a greater way since 2000.

**Table-4.1: Summary of the Newspaper Covered in the Study**

Newspapers	Period covered	Total Number of Days	Total Items Identified
Prothom Alo	July 2004 - June 2007	796	838
Daily Star	July 2004 - June 2007	1013	1248
Financial Express	July 2004 - June 2007	997	1102
Jugantor	July 2004 - June 2007	839	885
			<b>4073</b> (Total Items)

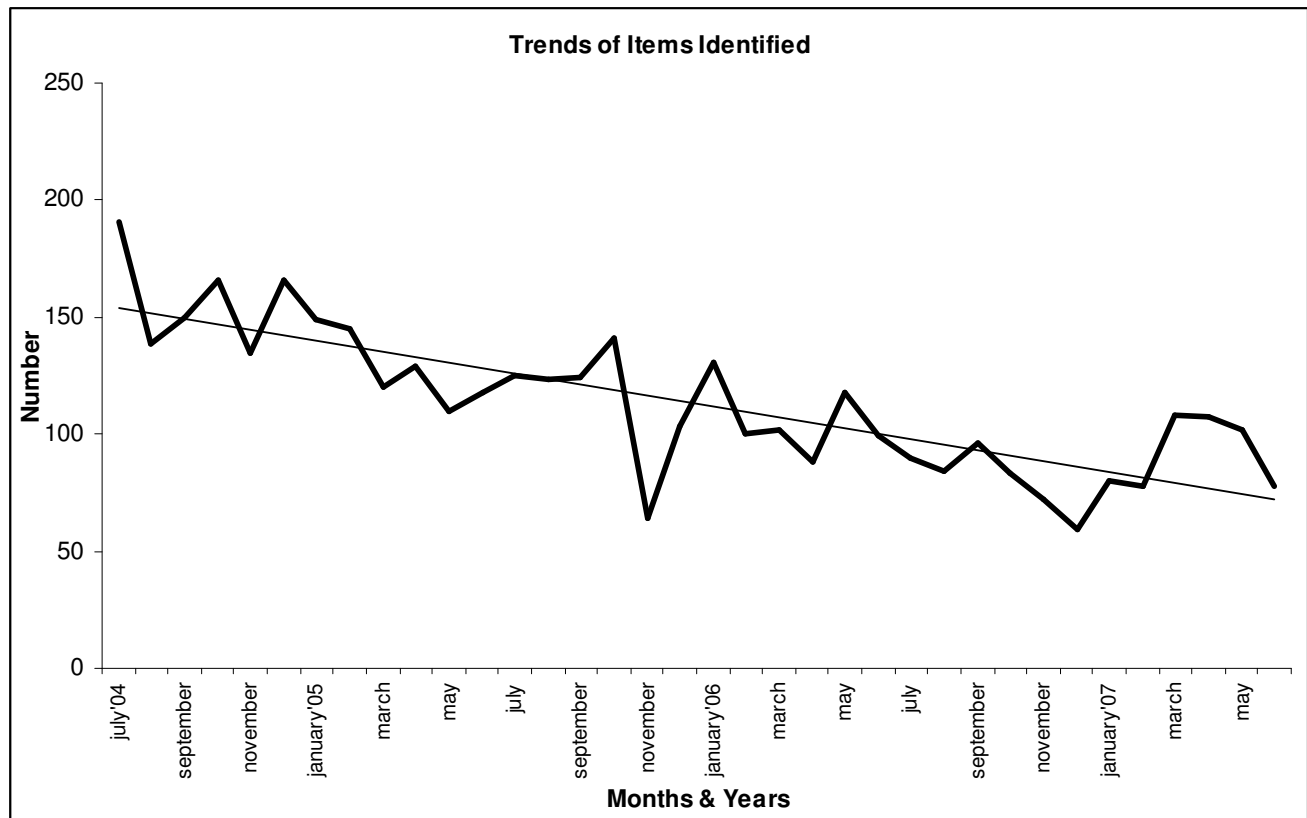
It is important to note that during the period under review, the highest items have been identified from The Daily Star as the newspaper has two pages dedicated for the business news (The Star Business).

Again, the total number of days is lower than the total number of items identified in the newspapers.<sup>3</sup> It is because, in some cases, more than one item was found on a single day.

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<sup>3</sup> See Annex for details

Graph-4.1: Trends of Items Identified for Content Analysis



The above graph depicts the trends of news items identified for the content analysis. It shows that over the years the number of relevant items marked a general decline, as indicated by the linear downward trend line. There are, however, moderate fluctuations except for a sharp decline in November 2005 (only 64 items identified). Further gradual decline is found in June 2006 and it continued up to February 2007. This is mainly due to political unrest and uncertainty the country had to face during these months. Upward trends started again in March 2007 and it continued up to May 2007 as caretaker government tried to initiate some reform activities. The decline in June is, however, low as there was lower excitement on national budget under the non-political government.

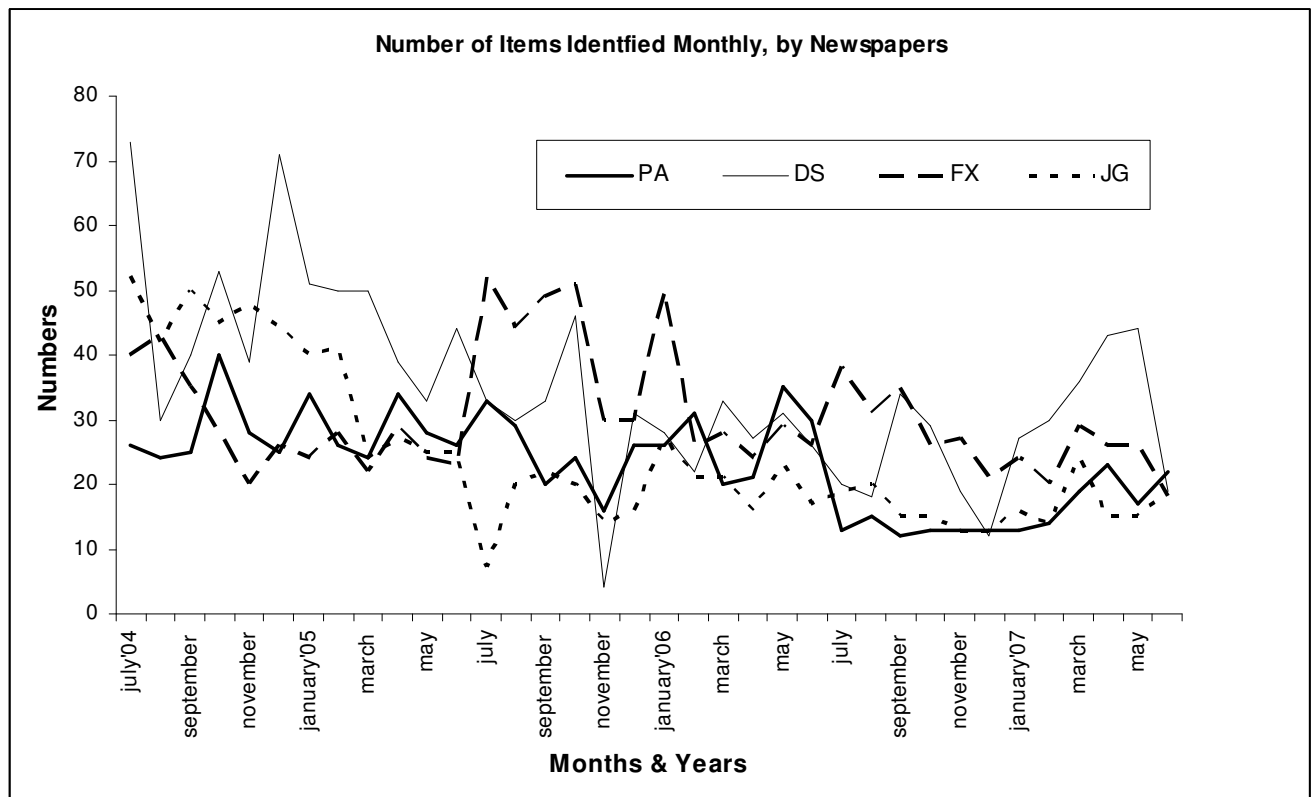
The reports (along with editorials and post-editorials) published during the period in the four newspapers have been carefully reviewed and put in the content matrix<sup>4</sup>. Here, most of the items on regular and routine activities and events have been skipped as these items have little relevance to policy related issues. For instance, daily transactions on the share market or monthly export figure of the country are a regular issue. These types of items have been taken into consideration when there is any gross fluctuation or any major disclosure appeared.

As we have a generally declining trend in the news items with moderate fluctuations, the breakup of the trends within four newspapers shows that Prothom Alo has lesser fluctuation while The Daily Star has higher fluctuation. It can be easily visible from the Graph. This may be because in a period of political uncertainty policy decisions on important economic matters are generally ignored as key stakeholders remain busy in other aspects of national life. Media, which historically aspires to

<sup>4</sup> The matrix has been attached in the annexure

leave a note on public affairs also finds it not worthwhile to focus on issues that would get the least priority of the policymakers. This is to say that media managers apply their senses to grab the best timings for agenda setting.

**Graph 4.2: Number of Items Identified Monthly, by Newspapers**



By using the statistical tools, we also determine the Standard Deviation, Mean and Coefficient of Variation as follows:

**Table 4.2: Standard Deviation, Mean and Coefficient of Variation**

	PA	DS	FX	JG
SD	7.40	14.42	9.34	12.15
Mean	23.28	34.67	30.61	24.58
Coefficient of Variation	0.32	0.42	0.31	0.49

The table shows that coefficient of variation is smaller for Prothom Alo and Financial Express while higher for The Daily Star and Jugantor. The coefficient of variation describes the magnitude of sample values and the variation within them. The lower value indicates smaller variations and a more stability.

In the content matrix, the display positions of the published items have been noted so that importance of the subjects/issues to the newspaper can be determined.

Later, we tried to determine whether the published items Reflect/Express/Analyze/Advocate six distinctive areas. These are:

- Policy:** Considers relevant policy formulation and revision as well as policy as a barrier or facilitator.
- Regulation:** Considers different government regulations.
- Implementation:** Whether items focus or reveal problems in implementation.
- Investment:** Whether the focus is investment related.
- General Information:** Whether it is simply providing information.
- Pricing/Costing:** Whether the item focuses pricing and/or costing issue of any sector due to policy or regulation.

Simultaneously, the content analysis revealed whether the published item is:

- Informative:** Provides sufficient information
- Analytical:** Analyses the scenario
- Advocacy:** Advocates certain change or amendment of policy and regulation.
- Mix:** Mixture of the above mentioned three things.

After compiling the matrix the frequency of the issues and subjects appeared in the four newspapers during the period under review has been determined. At this stage, standard coding method has been applied with the help of SPSS programme.

#### **4.3 Discussions & Relevant Interviews**

We have made a series of formal and informal discussions with bureaucrats, business people, journalists and academics. For a quick check with our findings, based on comprehensive media content analysis, we have conducted interview of selected policymakers, business leaders and media gatekeepers as Key Informant Interview.<sup>5</sup>

#### **4.4 Limitations of the study**

There are, however, some limitations in the study. First, those who worked for the study are working journalists, not formal researchers. Second, we gathered a huge volume of data through the newspaper content analysis and monitoring but we didn't have adequate time for analyzing them to the maximum level. Time constraint was a big factor. The third limitation is that we had to rely on the interviewees' views based on their memory. And finally, this study is a unique one in the country and we had no preset examples of this kind of study that would have been very useful to the study team.

### **5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Our primary objective is to know whether and how media coverage influences policy decisions. To find out the answers, at first we have tried to identify the extent of media coverage, during the period under review, closely linked with policy issues. Here we have also compared the extent of the coverage of other components (regulation, implementation, etc.). Later, we found the key sectors (top 10) getting priority in the newspapers in line with their coverage. We also observed the display position of the items to see the importance given by the newspapers. Finally, we recapped the analysis and drew our conclusion with some suggestions.

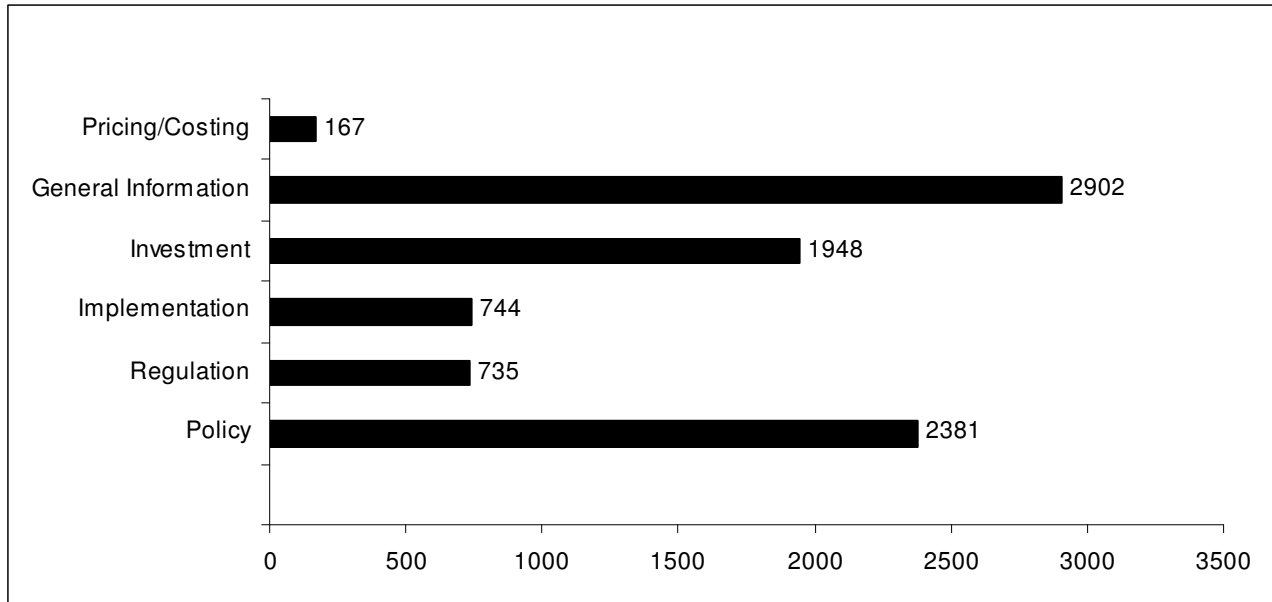
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<sup>5</sup> Sample questionnaire has been attached in the annexure.

### 5.1 Main Concentration

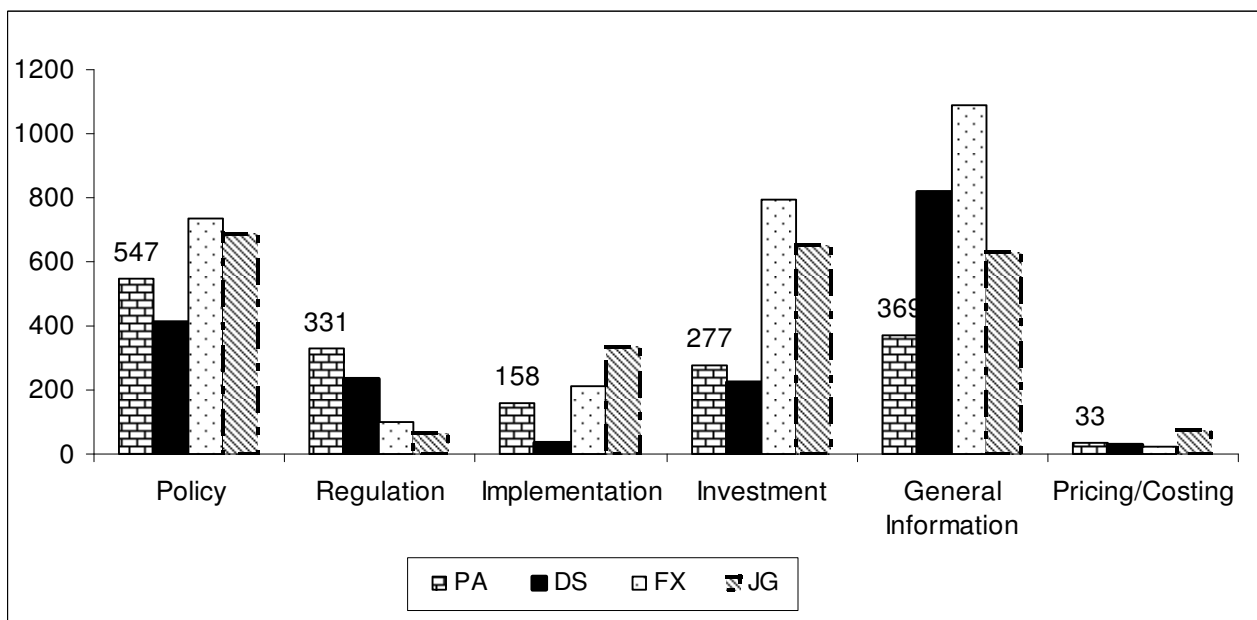
As we have mentioned earlier, we have to know the extent of policy converge of the news items. Otherwise it would not be possible to identify the extent of the newspapers' role on policy related issues.

**Graph 5.1: Trends of Reflections in News Items**



Based on our analysis we have found that among the 4,073 news items identified, 2,381 or 58.5% items expose policy and policy related areas. So, the coverage of the policy related news and analysis in the newspapers is quite large (Graph 5.1). At the same time, we found that there are 2,902 items reflecting or expressing general information, which is 71.2% of the total items identified. Apart from policy and general information, there are other elements (regulation and implementation) that sometimes appeared simultaneously with policy.

**Graph 5.2 Trends of Reflections in News Items: Newspaper Wise**



We also found that Financial Express has the highest items on policy, investment and general information. In terms of the coverage consistency, Prothom Alo is found more consistent than the other three newspapers. It has not a very high or very low concentration on any of the six elements like in The Daily Star or Jugantor.

This, however, needs to be interpreted carefully as a news item focusing on information inherently has some analytical aspects.

**Table 5.1: Ratio of Reflections of the News Items (in percent) in Newspapers**

	Policy	Regulation	Implementation	Investment	General Information	Pricing/ Costing
PA	65.27	39.50	18.85	33.05	44.03	3.94
DS	32.77	18.99	2.80	17.79	65.54	2.48
FX	66.97	9.17	19.42	72.14	98.73	2.18
JG	77.63	7.46	38.08	73.90	70.85	8.93

As already mentioned, apart from policy and general information there are other elements that sometimes appeared simultaneously with policy. We will explain this below, otherwise it would be quite misleading. Moreover, as our primary focus is policy related issues we will look for policy with regulation and general information only.

## 5.2 Crosscutting Concentration

Of the items covered, many reflect both policy and regulation, or policy and general information, and so on. There are some items that express only policy or regulation. So there are some crosscutting concentrations that need to be observed carefully.

**Table 5.2 Ratio of Items Covering Policy &/or Regulation**

Items Covering Policy &/or Regulation		Newspapers				Total
		PA	DS	FX	JG	
No	% within NUMNP*	16.95	56.81	29.40	19.77	33.15
	% of Total*	3.49	17.41	7.95	4.30	33.15
Yes	% within NUMNP	83.05	43.19	70.60	80.23	66.85
	% of Total	17.09	13.23	19.10	17.43	66.85
Total	% within NUMNP	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
	% of Total	20.57	30.64	27.06	21.73	100.00

\*NUMNP=Number of Newspapers

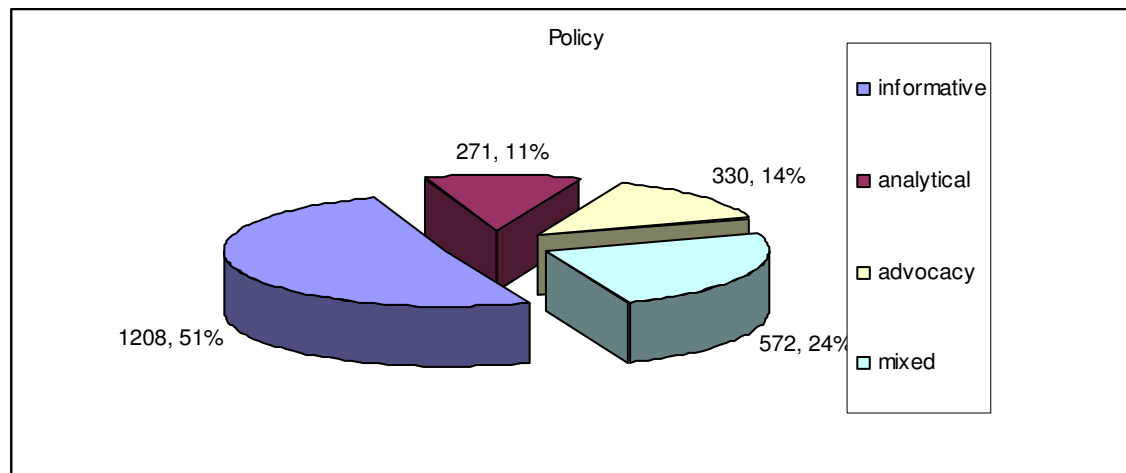
\*\* Total=Number of Items Appeared Simultaneously

The above table shows that around two-thirds of the total items, identified for the study, have covered policy and/or regulation. So, the crosscutting issues are quite visible here. As policy and regulation, both are important for investment climate, newspapers' concentration in this area clearly reveals their interest in investment climate. It is mentionable that Prothom Alo and Financial Express have more items covering policy and/or regulation. The ratio of the Daily Star is quite high (30.64%) as higher number of items have been identified from this newspaper compared to others.

### 5.3 Policy Concentration

Now, concentrating only on policy, we will get clearer picture. When we go through the policy related items we found that half of the policy related items are informative.

**Graph 5.3 Types of Policy Related News Items**



From the chart it is clear that policy related advocacy and analysis are still low in newspapers. There is, however, a mixture of all the three types and that is around one-fourth of the policy related news items covered.

From this findings we can say that newspapers' interest in policy is strong, but their role in policy setting or influencing is not strong. Providing information is helpful to stakeholders and policymakers, but it is not enough to influence policy formulation or revision. Without strong advocacy and adequate analysis, it is not possible to influence policy strongly. The huge and continuous coverage on certain issues have some impact on policy. But, it is not enough to set a direction of policy change unless the news items have enough elements of advocacy and analysis. Besides news, publishing editorials, interviews, surveys and analytical articles become essential to influence policymakers.

If we analyze the total composition of news items in line with types of news, we find that all the newspapers heavily put emphasis on informative news items as disseminating information is their primary objective.

**Table 5.4 Types and Ratio of the Items**

	DS	%	FX	%	JG	%	PA	%	Total	%
<b>Informative</b>	680	30	704	31	559	24	358	16	2301	100
<b>Analytical</b>	170	35	33	7	39	8	246	50	488	100
<b>Advocacy</b>	185	37	107	21	57	11	150	30	499	100
<b>Mixed</b>	213	27	258	33	230	29	84	11	785	100
	1248	31	1102	27	885	22	838	21	4073	100

But, there are some interesting things that need to be noted here. Although informative item is on the top of all the four newspapers, there are some variations within the newspapers and these can be easily found from the above table.

For Prothom Alo, informative item is 43%, followed by analytical (29%) and advocacy (18%). Only 10% item is mixed. All the three other newspapers have higher rate in mixed items (DS: 17%, JG: 26% and FX: 23%). Thus Prothom Alo tries to maintain more clear distinction in the news items compared to the other three newspapers.

Again, Prothom Alo has the highest analytical items. Fifty percent of the total analytical items are from Prothom Alo, followed by The Daily Star (35%).

The Daily Star, however, leads in publishing advocacy type items as it shares 37% of the total items in this category followed by Prothom Alo (30%) and Financial Express (21%).

As we tried to identify secondary focus of the news items, we found that only 15% of the total items have secondary focus (Table 5.5). This means a news item primarily focuses on informative news and the same item has additional or secondary focus on analysis or advocacy. As the secondary focus is not very large, we ignored crosscutting focus.

**Table 5.5 Types of News (Secondary Focus)**

	Analytical	Advocacy	Total
PA	28	15	43
DS	186	49	235
FX	34	21	55
JG	205	71	276
Total	453	156	609

The analysis is also to some extent matched by the response received from the limited KII. Nearly all of them (businessmen, policymakers and media gatekeepers) think that newspapers in Bangladesh play a role in influencing the formulation of policy formulation/revision/improvement. But there are degree of variation in the opinion of disaggregate level which is presented in the following table (Table 5.6). It shows that only 9.1% of them think that the role is very significant in policy formulation while 27.3% think it is significant. Around 54% of them, however, opined that newspapers role is somewhat significant while some of them think the role is not significant.

**Table 5.6 Key Informant Views**

Newspapers Role in Influencing on			
Scale	Policy Formulation	Policy Revision	Policy Improvement
Very Significant	9.1 %	0%	0%
Significant	27.3 %	63.6%	45.5%
Somewhat Significant	54.5 %	27.3%	45.5%
Not Significant	0%	0%	0%
Not at all Significant	9.1 %	9.1	9.1 %

Interestingly one respondent doesn't agree that newspaper has any role in influencing the policy in Bangladesh. According to the respondent: 'I think newspapers hardly influence the government decision-making process. In our country, government takes decisions according to their own party-line thinking and manifesto. Even parliament plays little role in the decision-making process. Cabinet takes the decisions first and parliament usually approves those decisions through YES votes.' He tried to justify his proposition by saying: 'Major newspapers either follow the government line or follow their own agenda. National interest is hardly reflected in the newspaper



reporting or editorials. There are criticisms of government decisions but those criticisms are from their own points of interest.'

On influencing the policy decisions, 90% of the respondents mentioned that the advocacy type news reports are more effective because it contains justification/rationale why certain policy decision is needed and policy revision/reform is necessary. A few of them, however, cautioned that 'subjective biases run afore of the basic purpose of advocacy-type news reports, making them largely irrelevant.'

Our content analysis, however, reveals that only 14% of the total news items selected is advocacy type. Thus, there is a lack of capability of the newspapers to influence policy formulation and decisions.

In absence of capacity, the newspapers mostly depend on stakeholders' analysis and opinion to form their own judgment and push for policy reforms. This was quite visible in the KII interviews in which the media professionals admitted their dependence on stakeholders for agenda setting. The stakeholders, specially the businessmen, also made it clear that they employed media publicity to push for their desired policy reforms. Such is this symbiotic relationship that the media often published verbatim views of stakeholders without putting such proposed policy options to any authentication exercise. In pursuing policy advocacy, the media attaches more importance to the business community's views, as was evident in the case of whether to follow contractionary monetary policy. This was probably because of the private ownership of media by business groups. Also, the government's low credibility may have given rise to a general doubt on policymakers' views, as some KIIs said. As such, a general observation is that the dominant views of the society tend to dictate the media advocacy.

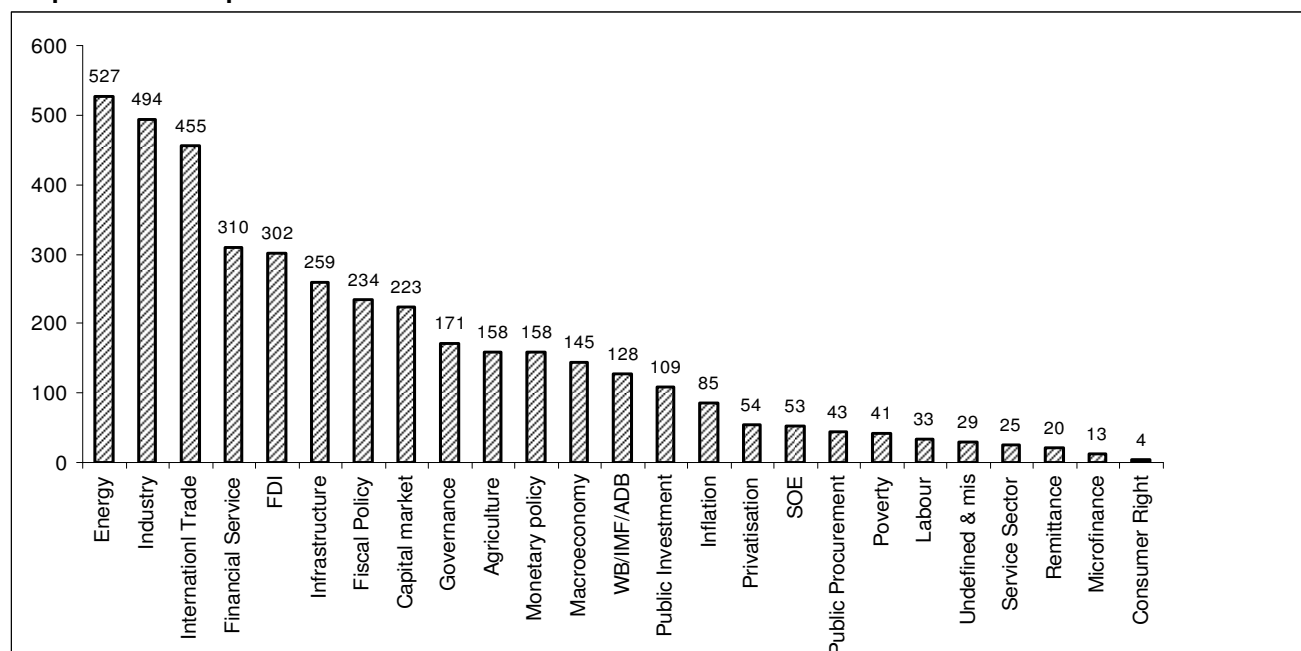
### **5.3 Priority Sectors**

Our analysis shows that of the 4,073 news items identified, energy sector gets the highest priority having around 13% of the total items. Industry is the second highest (12.1%) followed by international trade (11.2%).

Financial service and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) appeared in 4th and 5th position having 7.6% and 7.4% of the total coverage respectively while physical infrastructure (6.4%) and fiscal policy (5.7%) ranked at 6th and 7th. Coverage of capital market is 5.5% while governance has 4.2% of the total coverage with 8th and 9th position in the priority list. Both agriculture and monetary policy shared 3.9% each of the total coverage.

From this, we can say that the four newspapers, during the period under review, give more priority on these 11 sectors considering importance of development and investment climate of the country.

**Graph 5.4: Frequencies of the Sectors in the News Items**



The top 11 sectors have share more than 80% of the total news items identified for the study. The proportionate distribution of all the sectors is presented at table 5.7.

**Table 5.7 All Sectors: Appearance Ratio**

Sector	Frequency	Percent
Energy	527	12.94
Industry	494	12.13
International Trade	455	11.17
Financial Service	310	7.61
FDI	302	7.41
Infrastructure	259	6.36
Fiscal Policy	234	5.75
Capital market	223	5.48
Governance	171	4.20
Agriculture	158	3.88
Monetary policy	158	3.88
Macro Economy	145	3.56
WB/IMF/ADB	128	3.14
Public Investment	109	2.68
Inflation	85	2.09
Privatization	54	1.33
SOE	53	1.30
Public Procurement	43	1.06
Poverty	41	1.01
Labour	33	0.81
Undefined & miscellaneous	29	0.71
Service Sector	25	0.61
Remittance	20	0.49
Micro-finance	13	0.32
Consumer Right	4	0.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>4073</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The newspapers priority focus is significantly matched by the priority sorted by the policymakers and business leaders interviewed for the study. Their priority selection is as follows:

#### 5.4 Display Positions

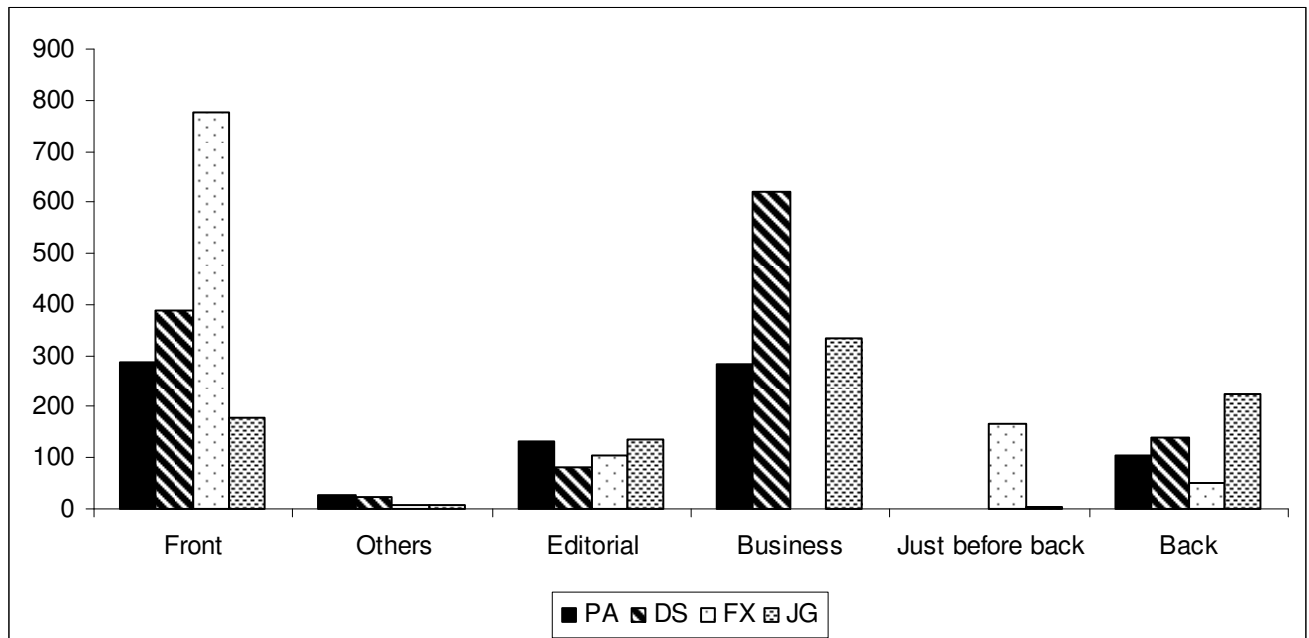
Of the total news items covered, 40% appeared on the front page of newspapers followed by 30% on the business page. One thing should be noted here. Financial Express has no dedicated business pages as the whole newspaper itself is highly dedicated to business and economic news. So, the business page is applicable for three other newspapers. Items on back page and editorial page shared 12.8% and 11.1% respectively of the total coverage.

**Table 5.8 Display Position of News Items in Pages**

Page	Appearance	Percent
Front	1629	40.0
Others	64	1.6
Editorial	452	11.1
Business	1239	30.4
Just before back	168	4.1
Back	521	12.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>4073</b>	<b>100.0</b>

It is important to note that items on the editorial page mostly focus on opinion and analysis, rather than providing hard information only. And editorial reflects the policy and stance of newspaper on certain issues.

**Graph 5.5 News Distribution in Pages of the Newspapers**

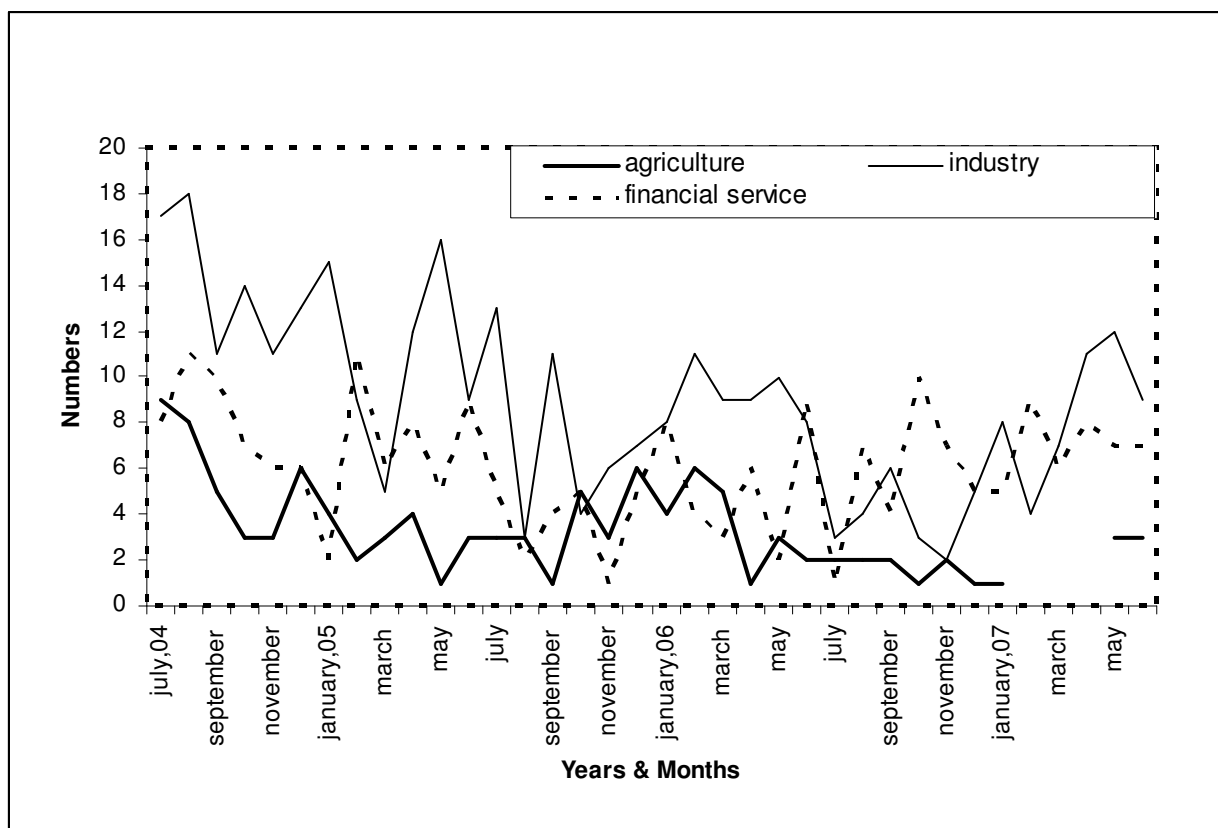


Most of the news items get 3/C (Three-column) display. It is about 40% of the total items followed by double column (2/C) display having 31.7% share.

### 5.5 Sectors' Appearance: Time Trend

We have identified 11 sectors mostly appeared in the newspapers. We also tried to see whether appearance in the newspapers in different time period has any linkage with policy decisions and initiatives.

**Graph 5.6 Monthly Appearance of News on Agriculture, Industry and Financial Service**



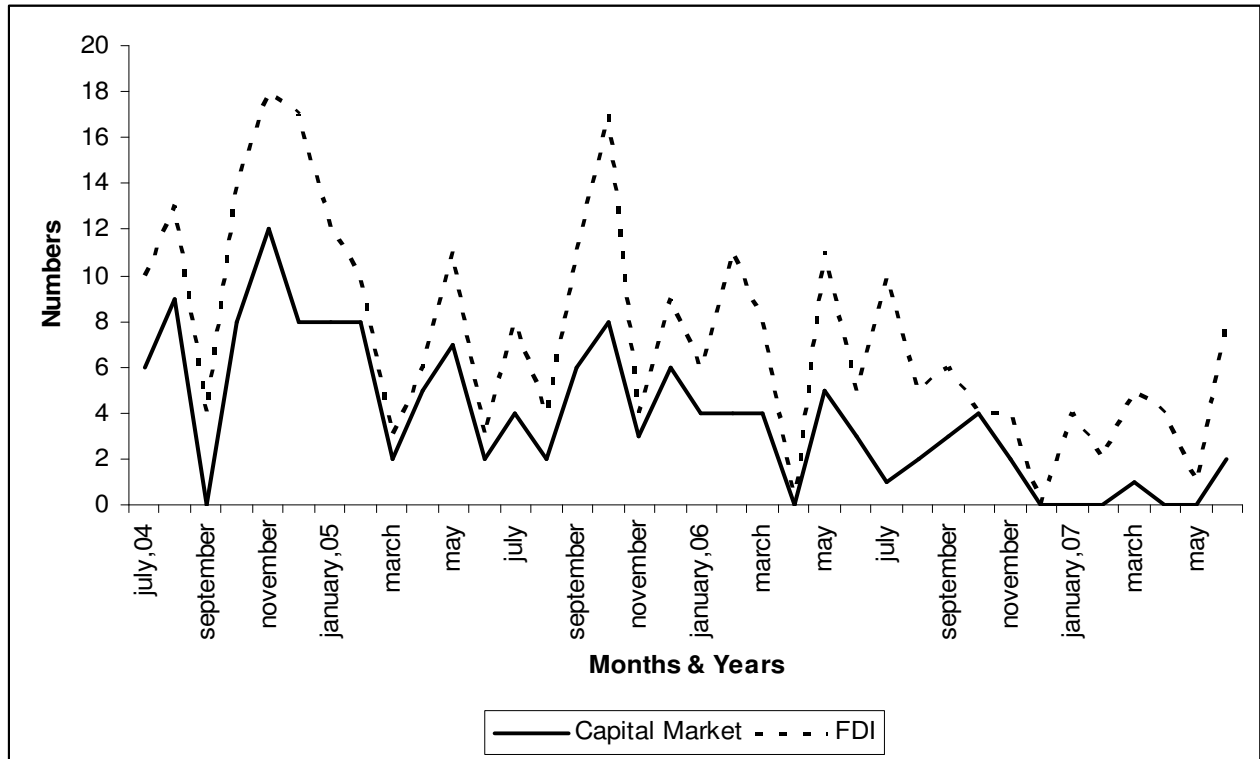
The graph 5.6 shows the time trend of agriculture, industry and financial service. We found that news on agriculture appears moderately over the months and there is no news in any month appeared 10 instances rather absent in few months. Industry has fluctuations having significant appearance during first seven months (July 2004-January 2005) of the period under review. This is the time when finalization of the Industrial Policy 2005 was under process. (The policy was unveiled in January 2005). News and analysis regarding Industrial Policy was there in the newspapers. The financial service, dominated by banking sector, had significant appearance over the months with lower fluctuations compared to industry. Reform activities, prescribed by the International Financial Institutions, was strong during the first half of the period under review while news on irregularities and problems were available throughout the years.

In a similar vein, we have depicted the trends of news items on capital market and foreign direct investment (FDI) in graph 5.7 and energy on graph 5.8.

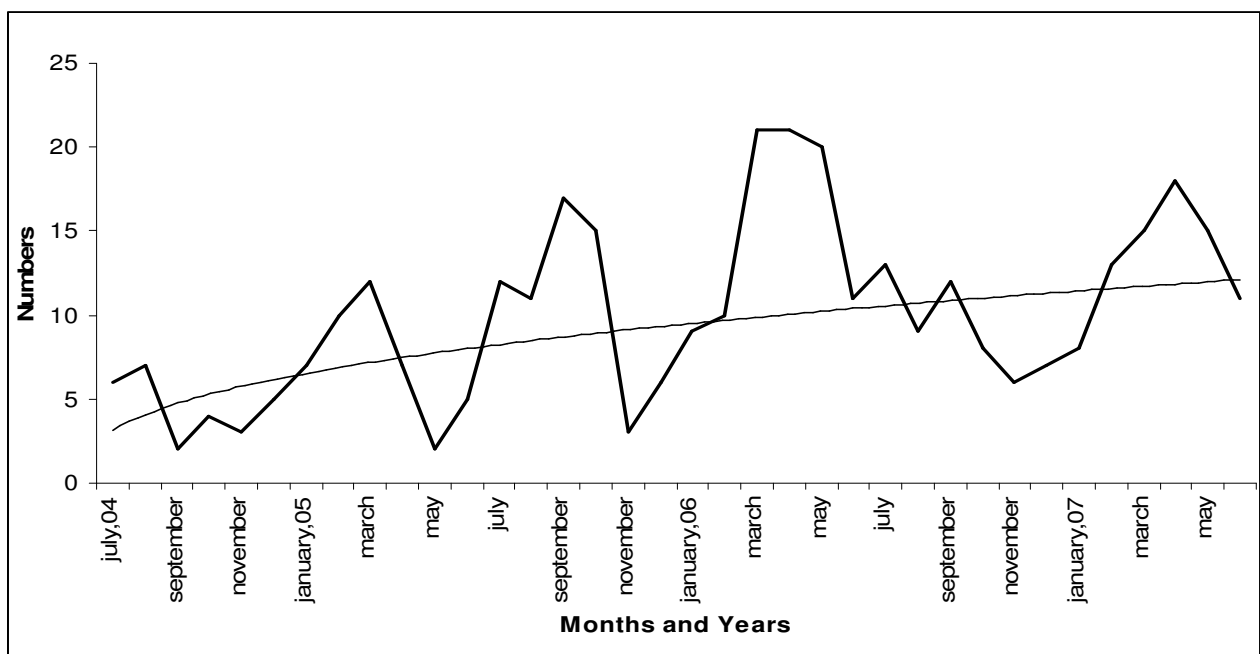
The FDI related items are mostly dominated by Tata's FDI proposal and debate on it. The policy debate on accuracy of the FDI data is also took place during the last half of 2005. These two factors influence news items on FDI. A development in the policy level in this regard needs to be mentioned. The central bank has asked for adjustment of the discrepancies in the FDI data and its finalization as BOI is mostly a facilitating organization regarding foreign investment.

Over the months, news on energy sector has gradually increased with few sharp decline and moderate fluctuations. This is due to gradual increase on crisis of the power and gas in both the household and industrial levels. The corruption and irregularities in the energy sector have also significantly highlighted by the newspapers. Debate on power and coal policies also increased as time goes on.

**Graph 5.7 Monthly Appearance of News on Capital Market and FDI**



**Graph 5.8 Monthly Appearance of News on Energy**



## 5.6 Policy Linkage: Cases

As we have mentioned earlier, though newspapers' interest in policy formulation and policy revision is quite strong, its role of influencing policy formulation or revision is not very strong. But there is no denying fact that the newspapers have some positive role in policymaking when linked with the investment climate issue. Our analysis, presented earlier, has confirmed the proposition. Here we present a few examples on how newspapers play a vital role to influence the policy. We present an example where policymakers don't heed to newspapers. The examples have been drawn during the period under review in the study. And this will show that stakeholders also rely on newspapers to push their agenda.

### RMG Minimum Wage

During the mid-June 2006, country has experienced massive labor unrest in the readymade garments (RMG) industry. The workers staged demonstration for better compensation including rise of minimum wage. There appeared a conflict of interest between garment factory owners and workers as owners' side was reluctant to raise the minimum wage. The government was also shaky to take quick and firm decision regarding minimum wage. Newspapers, during that period, gave extensive coverage of the issue and advocate for wage hike. Finally, government raised and re-fixed the minimum wage rate and ordered the RMG factories to implement the minimum wage by June 30, 2007.

### Export & Industrial Policies

Over the years, pharmaceuticals sector appears a very potential and vibrant sector of the country. This is significantly reflected in the newspapers where news on pharmaceuticals exports get special attention.<sup>6</sup> The demand of the manufacturers for policy support significantly reflected in the newspapers also. Later in the Export Policy Order 2006-09, revealed in May 2007, pharmaceuticals sector was rated as one of the six highest priority sectors. Pharmaceutical sector has been included in the new list of the highest priority sectors in view of its export potentials as the World Trade Organisation has offered the least developed countries exemption from patent rights, The other highest priority sectors are: agro-products and agro-processing, light engineering including auto-parts and bicycle manufacturing, shoe and leather, pharmaceutical, software and information and communications technology, and home-made textile.

Earlier, in the Industrial Policy (IP) 2005, revealed in January 2005, pharmaceutical goods become one of the newly added industries as the thrust sector. In the Industrial Policy 1999 there were 16 industries recognized as thrust sectors. The number has increased to 33 in the Industrial Policy 2005.

### IMF and Rate Hike

It was in early 2005, when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) suddenly suggested rate hike to curb inflationary pressure, business bodies and economists opposed the suggestion.<sup>7</sup> Before that, there was a gradual trend of lowering the lending rate that fueled domestic financing for investment in trade and industry. The newspapers also highlighted the issues and advocates for not to raise the rate. The central bank, however, tighten monetary policy to restrain credit growth as well as curb inflation. Thus, newspapers' efforts to influence the monetary policy did not succeed. It is to be noted that at that time, Bangladesh was tagged with the IMF under PRGF programme.

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<sup>6</sup> 'High time for Bangladesh to grab piece of global drug market' – March 31, 2005, The Daily Star; 'Pharma sectors holds out new promises' -- January 05, 2006, The Financial Express.

<sup>7</sup> 'Restriction on credit growth may prove counter-productive'... April 13, 2005, Financial Express; 'Lending rate like to hit investment: ICCB'- April 17, 2005, Financial Express; 'MCCI rallies against interest rate hike'—May 05, 2005, The Daily Star.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have tried to analyze the linkage between the newspapers and state policy formulation. To make it more distinctive, we have tried to find out whether newspapers in Bangladesh has any influence on policy formulation, revision an improvement in respect to investment climate. Considering the three consecutive fiscal years (2004-07) and four well-circulated newspapers (two Bangla and two English), we found that newspapers have strong interest in policy related issues. They have covered different important sectors with the policy perspective. But the relationship between newspapers role and policy direction is not very strong.

In our analysis, we have found that there are several examples where policy related debate is widely reflected in newspapers. Such coverage, to some extent, may be interpreted as newspapers' influence on policy formulation and/or revision. But there is little evidence of a systematic correlation between the newspapers and the policy formulation, revision and/or improvement.

It cannot be ascertained how much independent influence media could have on policymaking. The Klls have often said media helps their causes and exposure in media makes matters more prominent. But there was no definitive conclusion on media's independent power. It is observed that the media is successful in agenda setting, but not much in policy formulation on its own. The media's agenda-setting influence matched with that of policymaking only when the dominant stakeholders could exert great influence on the government or when the government saw status quo in policy reforms.

### 6.1 Summary of the findings

We can summarize the core findings of the study as follows:

- Coverage of policy is quite strong in the newspapers;
- Half of the policy related items are informative;
- Newspapers heavily emphasize informative news items as disseminating information is their primary objective;
- Policy related advocacy and analyses are still low in the newspapers;
- Newspapers' role on influencing policy formulation, revision and improvement is not strong.

### 6.2 Recommendation

Further study can be done to identify the reasons behind little systematic correlation between the newspapers and the policy formulation, revision and/or improvement.

## 7. REFERENCES

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Larcinese, V., Puglisi R., and Snyder, J. M. Jr [2007]. "Partisan Bias in Economic News: Evidence on the Agenda-Setting Behavior of US Newspapers." Cambridge, National Bureau of Economic Research.

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### ANNEXURE-3 - Data-table (Cross Tabulation)

Table-10.1: Month-wise Newspapers Coverage

YEAR	MONTH	NUMNP
2004	July	191
	August	139
	September	150
	October	166
	November	135
	December	166
2005	January	149
	February	145
	march	120
	April	129
	May	110
	June	118
	July	125
	August	123
	September	124
	October	141
	November	64
	December	103
2006	January	131
	February	100
	march	102
	April	88
	May	118
	June	99
	July	90
	August	84
	September	96
	October	83
	November	72
	December	59
2007	January	80
	February	78
	march	108
	April	107
	May	102
	June	78
<b>Total</b>		<b>4073</b>

Sector1 (Cross Tabulation)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Undefined & miscellaneous	29	.7	.7	.7
	Agriculture	158	3.9	3.9	4.6
	Industry	494	12.1	12.1	16.7
	Financial service	310	7.6	7.6	24.3
	Fiscal policy	234	5.7	5.7	30.1
	Poverty	41	1.0	1.0	31.1
	Capital market	223	5.5	5.5	36.6
	Public investment	109	2.7	2.7	39.2
	Fdi	302	7.4	7.4	46.6
	Energy	527	12.9	12.9	59.6
	International trade	455	11.2	11.2	70.8
	Infrastructure	259	6.4	6.4	77.1
	Soe	53	1.3	1.3	78.4
	Governance	171	4.2	4.2	82.6
	Monetary policy	158	3.9	3.9	86.5
	Public procurement	43	1.1	1.1	87.6
	Inflation	85	2.1	2.1	89.6
	Macro economy	145	3.6	3.6	93.2
	Remittance	20	.5	.5	93.7
	Consumer right	4	.1	.1	93.8
	Labor	33	.8	.8	94.6
	WB/IMF/ADB	128	3.1	3.1	97.7
	Microfinance	13	.3	.3	98.1
	Privatization	54	1.3	1.3	99.4
	Service sector	25	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	4073	100.0	100.0	

**Sector 2 to Newspapers Cross tabulation**

Sectors		Newspapers				Total
		DS	FX	JG	PA	
Sector 2	Agribiz	14	5	14	4	37
	Fertilizer	12	8	10	12	42
	Rice	0	1	2	7	10
	SME	14	21	24	10	69
	RMG & text	76	38	40	23	177
	Jute	6	5	9	5	25
	Others	30	39	68	9	146
	Bank	81	56	49	69	255
	Insurance	10	22	8	0	40
	NBFIS	3	4	2	0	9
	Budget	14	17	5	25	61
	Taxation	20	24	25	57	126
	PRSP	8	8	2	5	23
	Income disparity	0	1	0	2	3
	ADP	12	19	13	26	70
	Foreign assistance	3	4	7	3	17
	Power	104	94	27	21	246
	Gas	40	25	12	11	88
	Coal	19	18	6	0	43
	Oil	11	11	2	8	32
	Mineral	7	1	0	0	8
	Bilateral trade	41	9	27	4	81
	Regional trade	36	16	19	5	76
	Import	7	29	14	8	58
	Export	37	28	51	15	131
	Multilateral/WTO	33	13	9	9	64
	Sea port	45	30	23	17	115
	Land port	2	7	17	4	30
	Railway	5	4	0	1	10
	Telecom	25	6	6	7	44
	Roads	6	0	0	1	7
	Aviation	7	1	0	0	8
	Corporate governance	16	2	0	4	22
Interest rate	5	17	10	3	35	
FOREX	3	17	10	10	40	
<b>Total</b>		<b>752</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>2248</b>



**Page**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Front	1629	40.0	40.0	40.0
	Others	64	1.6	1.6	41.6
	Editorial	452	11.1	11.1	52.7
	Business	1239	30.4	30.4	83.1
	Just before back	168	4.1	4.1	87.2
	Back	521	12.8	12.8	100.0
	Total	4073	100.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.0		
Total		4074	100.0		

**Column**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	318	7.8	7.8	7.8
	2	1289	31.6	31.7	39.5
	3	1626	39.9	39.9	79.4
	4	680	16.7	16.7	96.1
	5	113	2.8	2.8	98.9
	6	24	.6	.6	99.5
	7	14	.3	.3	99.8
	8	8	.2	.2	100.0
	Total	4072	100.0	100.0	
Missing	System	2	.0		
Total		4074	100.0		

**Newspapers**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	.0	.0	.0
DS	1248	30.6	30.6	30.7
FX	1102	27.0	27.0	57.7
JG	885	21.7	21.7	79.4
PA	838	20.6	20.6	100.0
Total	4074	100.0	100.0	

### Sector1 \* Policy Cross tabulation

Count

Sectors	Policy	Total
	yes	
Undefined & Miscellaneous	15	15
Agriculture	106	106
Industry	305	305
Financial service	162	162
Fiscal policy	178	178
Poverty	33	33
Capital market	92	92
Public investment	63	63
FDI	125	125
Energy	330	330
International trade	261	261
Infrastructure	146	146
SOE	34	34
Governance	93	93
Monetary policy	121	121
Public procurement	31	31
Inflation	45	45
Macro economy	85	85
Remittance	5	5
Consumer right	3	3
Labor	21	21
WB/IMF/ADB	70	70
Microfinance	8	8
Privatization	35	35
Service sector	14	14
Total	2381	2381

### Month to Newspaper Cross tabulation

Months	Newspapers				Total
	DS	FX	JG	PA	
January	106	98	83	73	360
February	102	74	76	71	323
March	119	79	69	63	330
April	109	79	58	78	324
May	108	79	63	80	330
June	89	67	61	78	295
July	126	130	78	72	406
August	78	118	82	68	346
September	107	119	87	57	370
October	128	105	80	77	390
November	62	77	75	57	271
December	114	77	73	64	328
Total	1248	1102	885	838	4073

**Sector1 \* Page Cross tabulation**

		Page						Total
		Front	Others	Editorial	Business	Just before back	Back	
Sector1	Undefined & miscellaneous	15	2	5	3	3	2	30
	Agriculture	56	4	26	41	10	20	157
	Industry	123	7	62	221	17	64	494
	Financial service	144	1	20	97	5	43	310
	Fiscal policy	101	7	25	68	6	27	234
	Poverty	14	4	11	5	3	4	41
	Capital market	47	3	6	142	3	22	223
	Public investment	45	3	19	22	4	16	109
	FDI	113	4	24	107	17	37	302
	Energy	317	9	55	30	36	80	527
	International trade	125	6	41	219	22	42	455
	Infrastructure	90	2	32	78	12	45	259
	SOE	22	1	9	13	4	4	53
	Governance	92	2	17	34	3	23	171
	Monetary policy	68	0	26	35	3	26	158
	Public procurement	26	3	1	4	2	7	43
	Inflation	43	3	19	9	1	10	85
	Macro economy	59	3	25	40	2	16	145
	Remittance	9	0	0	10	1	0	20
	Consumer right	1	0	1	2	0	0	4
	Labor	12	0	4	9	1	7	33
	WB/IMF/ADB	71	0	10	23	9	15	128
	Microfinance	5	0	1	3	1	3	13
	Privatization	28	0	10	12	0	4	54
	Service sector	3	0	3	12	3	4	25
Total		1629	64	452	1239	168	521	4073

**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Sector1 * Implementation	744	18.3%	3329	81.7%	4073	100.0%
Sector1 * Investment	1948	47.8%	2125	52.2%	4073	100.0%
Sector1 * GI	2902	71.2%	1171	28.8%	4073	100.0%
Sector1 * Pricing/Costing	167	4.1%	3906	95.9%	4073	100.0%
Sector1 * Policy	2381	58.5%	1692	41.5%	4073	100.0%
Sector1 * Regulation	735	18.0%	3338	82.0%	4073	100.0%

**Sector1 \* Policy Cross tabulation**

		Policy	Total
		yes	
Sector1	Undefined & miscellaneous	15	15
	Agriculture	106	106
	Industry	305	305
	Financial service	162	162
	Fiscal policy	178	178
	Poverty	33	33
	Capital market	92	92
	Public investment	63	63
	FDI	125	125
	Energy	330	330
	International trade	261	261
	Infrastructure	146	146
	SOE	34	34
	Governance	93	93
	Monetary policy	121	121
	Public procurement	31	31
	Inflation	45	45
	Macro economy	85	85
	Remittance	5	5
	Consumer right	3	3
	Labor	21	21
	WB/IMF/ADB	70	70
	Microfinance	8	8
	Privatization	35	35
	Service sector	14	14
Total		2381	2381

**10. ANNEXURE-4 Database (Enclosed in CD)**