

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

President taking oath



After reading parts of the Constitution relating to the Chief Advisor in several articles and editorials in your daily, I have just one question. Why did the President take the Chief Advisor's oath? Clauses 3 thru 5 of Article 58C of the Constitution refer to a person holding the "office of Chief Advisor" while Clause 6 of the same article refers to the President assuming "the functions of the Chief Advisor...in addition to his own functions...". The Constitution also prevents any person from holding more than one constitutional office.

As the Presidency and the office of Chief Advisor are two distinct positions, President Iajuddin Ahmed cannot be and is not the Chief Advisor. He is now the president with additional functions. Therefore, it was a violation of the Constitution for the President to take the oath for the "office of Chief Advisor".

Bashar Chowdhury
Fairfax, Virginia, US

We are very confused whether the President has taken oath constitutionally as he has not paid heed to the opinion of constitution specialists like Dr. Kamal

Hossain, Dr. M. Zahir, Mr. Rokonuddin, Barrister Amir-ul-Islam etc. However, we expect him now to play his constitutional role strongly.

He can take following steps in this regard:

He can request the controversial Election Commissioners to resign. We think they will not be able to disregard the request. The President should bring the proper change in the administration which has been manipulated by the past government with a view to influencing the next election.

He should take proper action against the so-called Godfathers created during the tenure of all the past governments so that they can't hamper the environment of peaceful election.

He should be careful about the neutrality of the government run BTW & Bangladesh Betar.

The law and order situation should be improved at any cost. No neutrality should be shown if people are attacked brutally as happened in the recent movement of 14-party alliance.

Mohammad Kazi Mamun
Tolarbag, Mirpur

It seems the President was not following the provisions of the Article 58-C of the Constitution faithfully while considering the appointment of the Chief Advisor to the Caretaker Government. He invited political parties for discussion on the issue unnecessarily. The constitution does not allow it except for considering the fifth option under Art. 58-C. The president is supposed to proceed step by step himself. He is not required to seek the advice of anybody. The legal provisions are crystal clear.

Actually by discussing with the political parties, the president had brought upon himself unwarranted pressure, which he could not handle. The 4-party alliance did not specify why justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury was not acceptable to them but which the Awami League did in the case of justice KM Hasan. Without exhausting all the provisions of Art. 58-C, he has offered himself to be the Chief Advisor, which is a violation of the Constitution he is supposed to uphold. Moreover, the president is above 72 years old and therefore, unqualified for the post as per sub-section (7) (d) of Art.58-C.

Furthermore, the president is a BNP nominated person. Hence, a partisan Man which is a disqualification for the post of C. A.

It is reported in the media that the Military Secretary to the president had approached the would be Chief Advisors over telephone. Why so? Why didn't the President himself talk to them? Are they not important enough?

We are sorry to say that the President has disappointed the whole nation in handling the important issue of appointing the Chief Advisor. Now the 4-party alliance have got the President, Chief Election Commissioner and the Chief Advisor to the C.T.G. - all their nominees for holding the next general elections. Can we really accept the results of such elections? The Constitution has laid down clear guidelines in this respect but we have bungled the whole issue and have brought miseries to the people due to hunger for power of a few persons!

Abul Mohsin
Siddheswari, Dhaka

Stop this drama

Every time in my leisure period my first task is to surf the Bangladeshi newspapers online.

Always I look for the political situation in my country. It is totally ridiculous that our political leaders do not pay heed to the crisis sincerely.

So don't stage any more drama, we don't want to be part of such nasty things.

Saumitra Sarder, London, UK

Justice Hasan's final judgement?

As I read with utmost interest your commentary on the subject, this morning in your daily, I spared no time to write to you on your appropriate judgment for compliments to the decision of Justice KM Hasan.

He has honoured and/or respected the nation's aspirations in general and political parties in particular, in declining the post, as the head of the caretaker government, rising above his own personal interests. We salute him as a National Hero of the day.

As a matter of fact, when the trains of the two major opposing political forces were about to collide head on, falling in the same track without an alert or guide by the Station Master and we were helplessly counting the moments of tension for a disaster, he came and stood bravely, in between them all of a sudden. The imminent accident of these trains carrying us, the passengers, is thus averted saving our lives by his noble gesture.

Acitizen, On e-mail

The constitution or politicians?

It is a decision of great courage that the president has agreed to assume the charge of the Chief Advisor of the caretaker government notwithstanding the chaotic situation prevailing in the country. It is indeed a bold step that came following KM Hasan's refusal to head the caretaker government. However, the leader of the opposi-

tion Sheikh Hasina had disagreed to consider the president's suggestion. She advised the president to make the appointment in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. The Awami League had never spelled out whom they prefer as the Chief Adviser. But they have rejected Justice KM Hasan, showing utter disrespect for the constitutional mandate. In order to press their demand they have created a situation throughout the country when clashes and bloodshed are inevitable. And we have seen enough blood in the last three days.

Khaleq Mian
Kanthalbagan, Dhaka

Is anyone listening?

I have worked to establish peace in Sierra Leone. I had the reason to be proud of the works we have done for establishing peace in Sierra Leone. We worked to bring peace among the warring factions of the country. To my understanding, people of Sierra Leone were damn brutal. They had been so brutal that after killing one of their opponents, those barbarians used to open the hearts and chew it!! It was brutal to see even.

Today what we have watched on a TV channel was even more brutal and more barbarous. Our Bengalee people carrying LOGI and BOITHA beat two of the opponents to death on the spot. Alas! I am a citizen of this country where the likely next prime minister has asked her party members to come with these weapons (!) against the people whom she hopes to lead to peace! Although, I can guess the reason for such wrath of the people. But the application of leadership on the people has gone horribly wrong. My Shaheed Freedom fighter father and millions of freedom fighters did not want the Awami League of this kind to rule the country.

I am sure, I was wrong in my perception on the poor and less literate African nation--Sierra Leone. Today I feel sorry for my improper thought on them because I feel, my own nation is not much

better than them. You better don't kill them like this. He is another human being at least.

What is frustrating me is that, there is none in that party who can stand and say that, LOGI and BOITHA are not proper symbols to be given to the general mass. Having a boat and having a LOGI are two different things in the minds of the people. People are likely to remember Bangabandhu for boat and Sheikh Hasina for LOGI and BOITHA.

I know it for sure, it is better to protect your people than to allow them to be killed.

Masihur Rahman, On e-mail

Awami League's blunder?

It is generally believed that the AL has made a blunder by rejecting Hasan and at the same time not accepting BNP's reported willingness to reform the Election Commission. It was the EC which was solely working for election rigging by playing foul with the voter list which now contains a sizeable number of fake voters besides omitting a large number of genuine voters. Moreover, the EC headed by its present chief does not command confidence of majority of voters for its controversial role in preparation of the voter list. So when the BNP was amenable to consider AL's demand for reforming the EC, the AL should have grabbed the opportunity, because by reforming the present EC the apprehensions of the AL about its impartiality would have been removed. By accepting Hasan and going for election, the AL had a fair chance of coming back to power cashing on BNP's enormous failures in running the country. Unlike the EC, in no way it is possible for the head of the caretaker government to indulge in election rigging. This is absolutely absurd thinking. Perhaps with the changed circumstances now, reformation of the EC is not going to happen and by indulging in election boycott, street arsons etc., the AL is not going to gain anything

as the general public hate this turmoil and thereby the popularity of the party is bound to erode. The AL must realise that even if they boycott the election, there are other sizeable political parties including a large number of dissident members of the AL who will join the election. As such amidst all kinds of turmoil and controversy, election will be held as scheduled and there is absolutely no reason why the caretaker government should not be able to hold this. Therefore in the process the AL will come out as the sole loser.

MAHoque, On e-mail

as the general public hate this turmoil and thereby the popularity of the party is bound to erode. The AL must realise that even if they boycott the election, there are other sizeable political parties including a large number of dissident members of the AL who will join the election. As such amidst all kinds of turmoil and controversy, election will be held as scheduled and there is absolutely no reason why the caretaker government should not be able to hold this. Therefore in the process the AL will come out as the sole loser.

MAHoque, On e-mail

Political crisis

Today we are engaged in a final all-out battle between the BNP, Awami League and Jamaat. We would be blind to say that this is not on. Dhaka is in a stage of hostile siege, the ports are closed bringing the economy to a grinding halt, schools and colleges are shut ensuring that our children are subjected to further disadvantages and can no longer compete on a global footing for a better education. We are prisoners in our homes. What about the violence, anarchy, bloodshed and lawlessness? Is this democracy? Do we deserve democracy? It is said "When a great democracy is destroyed, it is not because of enemies from without, but rather because of enemies from within."

The truth of this statement is becoming terrifyingly clear as we see this country each day losing out on every front. We find ourselves in a position of impotency because we have become numb and apathetic. We need a spark to awaken our dormant indignation so that we can make our politicians understand that they must remove the whole sorry mess of twisted, warped violence from the streets. They must resolve their conflict in a peaceful manner so that we may have a free and fair election and new birth of honesty and decency in the government.

Amna Rahman
Baramaghbar, Dhaka

Saifur on Dr. Yunus

In his typically shortsighted outburst, Saifur Rahman has instigated questions about the credibility of Professor Yunus's historic Nobel Peace Prize, and as such slammed the Grameen Bank for its micro credit loan system.

It is not the first time, though, that this gentleman has failed to see beyond his own nose. Not too long ago he ridiculed the RMG sector in Bangladesh, the most consistent and highest foreign exchange earner (besides overseas remittance) during the last five years, by saying something to the effect of "Tailors cannot bring development for the country!".

I think the statement of Saifur should be brought to the notice of the Nobel Prize committee. It would be interesting to find out how the committee would react to such allegations as being influenced by the Clintons. But again, the Nobel Committee will have far more constructive things to do than taking a character like him too seriously.

Reaz Shaheed
Banani, Dhaka

I was a great fan of finance minister M. Saifur Rahman in BNP's first term (1991-96). In that naive government he was an exception. Despite some slippage of his tongue he was doing well. Since 2001 something has changed with him. He is not only under-performing compared to his predecessor (SAMS Kibria), he is talking crazy too. His performance is evident, in Kibria's tenure our GDP growth was neck-to-neck with our neighbours', in Saifur's tenure our GDP growth has fallen at least 2-3% points

below that.

First, he was advising economists to see the construction sites to find real development in the country. Some termed it 'Development by Construction Site (DCS)' model. Now he is taking on our pride professor Yunus. What a goat or a thousand taka can do is beyond the comprehension of a rich man like him, he can only see millions and billions.

Well, the queen also could not understand why people facing shortage of bread were not eating cake instead. There is a time when someone should just retire.

Zakaria Khondker
San Francisco, California, USA

The recent comments by Saifur Rahman are a disgrace to the nation. Initially, he was quoted stating that "True development of the country will be achieved through establishing large-scale industries and modernising agriculture, not by running micro credit programmes." If this was so apparent then what has his government done about it - other than ensuring lucrative contracts for its cronies with no positive outcome for the country.

Then he states that "The present government has distributed more micro credit loans than the Grameen Bank but none was able to relieve themselves of poverty." If micro credit has not worked then why did this government disburse such loans? He needs to decide as to whether the government needs to be praised for its efforts or denounced for its incompetence.



Thirdly, the comments about the links to the Clintons are totally misplaced. Professor Yunus and Grameen Bank were selected for the Nobel Prize from a field of over 150 candidates, and the decision has been widely hailed by the international community by an unprecedented consensus. What the minister should focus on is the shame that the candidature of Professor Yunus and Grameen did not have the "high profile" support of either the immediate past prime minister or the opposition leader.

Nafis Ahmed
Jakarta, Indonesia

Throughout the world, let us face it even if we harbour any animosity toward him, Dr Yunus with his Grameen Bank has spread the arms of righteous pride for all Bangladeshis.

The former finance minister's comment as published on the 20th in the DS on the fame the great son has brought for his motherland, indirectly yet apparently mocking at and questioning the validity of the Nobel Prize, is shocking jealousy at best, pure and simple sadism at worst.

First, even years before the Nobel Prize declaration, the robust ideas of Dr. Yunus had

been not only recognized by educated public all over the world but also taken up in nonpartisan intellectual tracts as a wonderful paradigm of poverty alleviation (e.g. "microeconomics", an excellent mathematical anthology of economic theories, by Varian of Michigan University).

Secondly, the minister became overwhelmingly prejudiced towards bankers. Once, in the name of the World Bank and the IMF, much too hastily and unjustly, by a peremptory fiat shrouded in mystery, he sent to forced retirement about 50 percent of the employees of a development bank in the name of privatization. Then the privatization was shelved. New appointments were made on the heels of the reversal. To those who lost their jobs over nothing for his foul meddling in a boondoggling, his action did appear sadistic.

Third, we know the entrepreneurs in the garment industry have made supernormal profits. But then is it not a market economy where information asymmetry does exist and entrepreneurs must take decisions with risks while investing time, energy, effort, funds and business acumen in an environment of uncertainty? No mean job to bring foreign currency and create sizeable employment generation for thousands of needy people. The minister, however, was too unkind to make comments on the BTV about those entrepreneurs: "They are just tailors!"

Safdar Ali
Kusumbagh, Moulvibazar

Who is responsible?



Who is responsible for the two days of loss of lives and properties in Bangladesh? To seek the answer we should go back to the days when the outgoing government raised the retirement age of the Justices from 65 to 67. The opposition in the parliament didn't oppose it instantly. Rather, the opposition demanded reforms in electoral laws and caretaker government, which is the outcome of the cumulative failure of all political forces since 1991.

Neither the government nor the opposition wanted to discuss the reform issue in parliament.

One thing we should learn from the latest crisis: politicians must be farsighted.

Saif Tinku
North Badda, Dhaka

Yesterday, I was sitting with my class friend in my drawing room and watching the Channel-i. I was watching the news and my friend came to me at that time. On

the TV screen I saw some horrible scenes. I was scared and my friend asked me a question. His question was just like this- are your countrymen mad? I could not answer this question. I had to explain the political situation of our country and after hearing everything he was depressed. Not only my friend, we are deeply shocked and scared about this kind of political culture. We got a country in 1971 by sacrificing hundreds of thousands of lives.

But what are we watching today?
Md Saifur Rashid
Sevenoaks, Kent

I was horrified to view on ntv Awami League activists beating up Jamaat workers at Purana Paltan in the afternoon of Saturday. My eight-year-old son was around. I asked him to leave the room. I did not want him to view and learn that people could be so cruel.

In 1973, I was a student of

Rangpur Zilla School and there was a Rakkhi Bahini camp right on the big school compound. Often on way back from the school we were drawn to the camp by cries of people being subjected to torture. Rakkhi Bahini soldiers would bring people on trucks (from where we could never figure out), get them down and then start beating them with batons and bricks until these poor creatures succumbed to

death.
I still remember the Bichitra cover story on murder on the street written by Kazi Anwar Hossain. It was so shocking, so demoralising.

Today I write to you with a very heavy heart. And I know I shall not calm down unless I see that people protest violence as such. From ntv, it is easily possible to precisely find out those who took part in the killing on the street. I suggest that posters be printed

with their photographs asking people to refrain from violence.

Can the High Court ask the government to establish identity of those cruel people and take legal action against them? Will the media help the police in this regard by supplying photographs and video footage.

And what about our 'dear' leaders Sheikh Hasina and M. A. Jaill who had asked their party men to lay siege to Dhaka with sticks and poles? Was not that an

open instigation? Will not justice call for action against them too? Cannot the court of law initiate suo moto action against such political leaders? In fact, these senseless leaders should be held first and penalised for instigating violence.

Ajiktumer Roy
Dollis Hill, London