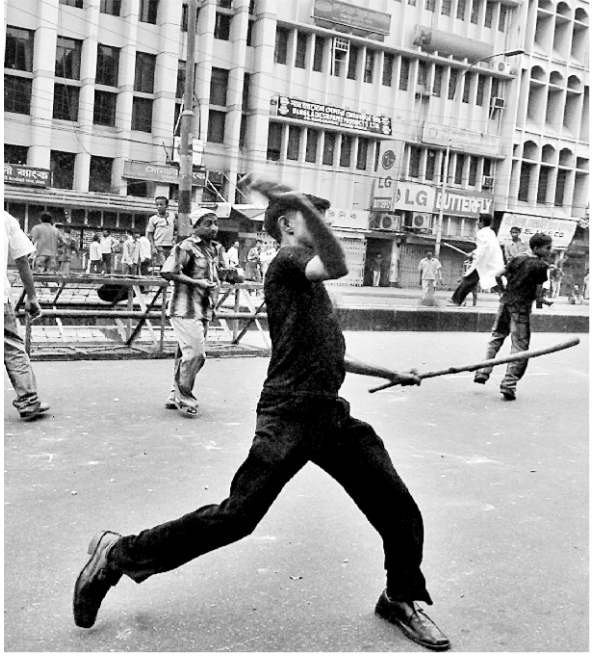


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Earthquake and diplomacy

The devastating earthquake that rocked Pakistan last year had left as many as 80 thousands dead and rendered hundreds of thousands homeless, while property worth billions of dollars have been destroyed. One year after the tragedy, the scene at the sites is reportedly repelling and disgraceful. The world bodies like the UN had pledged over \$5 billion for rehabilitation services of the homeless and injured, but till date they have not fulfilled much. As a result, the situation is far from satisfactory, to state the least. Although President Musharraf claimed that conditions have improved and the relief and habitation drives progressed tremendously, the BBC and other media reported that the overall scene in the quake-hit regions is depressing and alarming and Pakistan has to speed up the work quite earnestly.

But Pakistan is busy in fighting the terrorists and killing or, much worse, handing over them to the US forces for further torture, rather than taking up the rehabilitation job more systematically and thus most people affected by the devastation have remained homeless and continue to reel under deceases and lead a pathetic life. Islamabad thus seemingly has failed to make good use of its diplomatic skills to get the support of the USA and the EU, with which it has good relations, for bringing the much-needed resources for the rehabilitation work. If, however, Musharraf feels satisfied with the notion that a failed foreign policy is much better than not having one at all as in the case of many states today, including Pakistan's neighbour India, that amounts to over simplification of the sufferings of his people.

A foreign policy that is unable to support the legitimate domestic needs is no policy at all.
Dr. Abdul Ruff Colachal
Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Some questions

Assuming that everything goes on well, free & fair elections will be held in January 2007. The losers will scream that the elections were rigged and for the next five years they will boycott the parliament. How does that change the fate of this country?

The core problems are the leadership of the BNP & the AL. Both these parties are a one-person show. Party leaders are not elected; leadership of Hasina & Khaleda within the party remains unchallenged and they are not accountable to their party. How come Khaleda remained chief of the BNP when she lost elections to the AL? How come Hasina remained the AL party chief after she lost elections to the BNP? What were they rewarded for? Year after year the same corrupt people

remain in charge of these parties. There has been no election to various posts within these parties. Parties promising democracy are not democratic themselves. What I fail to understand is that from intellectuals to media to general public, nobody is demanding that genuine democratic reforms take place within the BNP-AL first.

Even in the fancy dialogue & seminars sponsored by a section of the media, the so called 'intellectuals' & 'elite' come up with all kinds of solutions, except calling for reforms of BNP & AL itself. May I know why? We are expecting democracy, peace & stability from two autocratic & dynastic parties - you mean to say that I should believe that the emperor is wearing new clothes!

Syed Husain
Old DOHS, Dhaka Cantt, Dhaka

Death of construction workers

The unnatural deaths of construction workers while at work are on the rise at an alarming rate as per reports published in the newspapers almost everyday. These accidental deaths take place due to the sheer indifference of builders, engineers and other related technicians who are assigned to supervise the construction works. It is important to mention that people who do risky jobs such as plastering, painting, fitting window panes etc., on the high rise buildings should have protective gears such as steel helmet, thick hand gloves, ropes firmly tied to their waists etc, which will protect them from falling directly on the grounds and save their lives. Furthermore, a small clinic must be put at each construction site with a paramedic for providing first aid and other related services to the workers in the event of minor accidents.

The builders should also provide the workers with insurance policy until the time the building is completed. I know these suggestions will never see the light of the day because who cares if an ordinary illiterate worker dies! I am sure nobody is there to fight for his or her rights.

Humayun Hyder
Zigatola, Dhaka



Violation of constitution

For the past couple of days probably the most discussed word was constitution. All the political party men and experts told media that everything should be done according to the constitution, especially about the caretaker government and some groups said that the constitution was violated. But for this violation (if any) no big shots suffered. On the contrary, millions of common people suffered mentally, physically, and financially; students lost their education hours and, most importantly, more than 20 people were killed.

Part III of the constitution includes a number of fundamental rights. Among them Article 36 mentions about freedom of movement (subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the public interest, every citizen shall have the right to move freely throughout Bangladesh, to reside and settle in any place therein and to leave and re-enter Bangladesh) and Article 37 mentioned about freedom of assembly (every citizen shall have the right to assemble and to participate in public meetings and processions peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of public order).

I am not an expert on the constitution but I understand from Articles 36 and 37 that we have the constitutional right to

move freely throughout Bangladesh at any time and participate in the meetings peacefully but without arms, except when restrictions are imposed by law. Then why we cannot move freely during hartal and oborodh? And why in public meetings people come with and use arms? Isn't it a visible major violation of the Articles 36 and 37? We are reading, hearing and watching many debates and logical explanations about the violation of the constitution in forming the caretaker government, which is neither visible nor understandable to many of us. But they keep mum when the Articles 36 and 37 are violated seriously.

How long will we suffer? Can't we do anything to cure the disease permanently, or at least for the next ten years?

Rasel Khan
PhD Student
Okayama University

The big mistake of the AL, for which their leadership should take responsibility, was to drop their demand for revision of the rules to ensure a "neutral" chief of the caretaker government (which, may I point out, is hypocritical because they were the ones to write the caretaker govt rules initially and use it to win the first caretaker govt-led election). This is what they were saying for five long years (and the country

paid a price of total destruction) until the "shonglaps" came along.

Then, in their haste to quickly get into power and get into the seat of self-enrichment (they must have been turning blue in their face with envy, seeing how BNP leaders have become multi-millionaires in the last five years), the AL leadership thought they saw weakness in the BNP. Quickly they dropped their more legitimate demands, and settled only for the removal of KM Hasan. Little did they realise that this led them straight into BNP's trap.

Brilliant! The BNP played a high-risk poker game, stacked the cards in its favour, and won. I think the AL has been completely blind-sided by this brilliant "chess move". They were voiceless and in disarray (their meeting was behind closed doors), even Sheikh Hasina disappeared from public view. Only the thick-spectacled Abdul Jalil has been in public view recently, and, all they could do is say that they will observe the president and meekly declare victory that KM Hasan was removed.

All is fair in a game where no sides played by the rules. Five years of taking the country down the drain for what? Five years of "karmashuchiis", violence and agitation for something so little? KM Hasan was not even in the picture when the AL started its

violent street campaign five years ago!

Mr. Oli is no saviour of the country either. If he really felt so strongly about BNP corruption, he should have resigned a long time ago (like Mr. Chowdhury). Instead, he is trying to have it both ways. First, he enjoys the BNP-led corruption for five years without any complaint, and then, when he thinks that BNP is done for, he jumps ship at the last minute to join the next boat of self-enrichment or glory.

No, we have had it with corrupt politicians of all parties. As an ordinary citizen and observer of the scene, I am fed up with the corruption, bribery, the games, the manipulations, the wanton destruction of public and private property, the complete destruction of peace and security of the innocent public, and the destruction of an economy that was one time called the "Next Emerging Asian Tiger".

We have to "write-off" completely the current generation of politicians (and their children, siblings, relatives, chamchas, etc.) as "beyond repair" and prepare the next generation of new leaders for our country who will have no institutional memory of their grandparents' lust for money and corruption.

Zahid Khan, Ph.D.
Riyad Bank
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

For two days what we were

observing was a complete anarchy around the country arson and vandalism of private property, shooting etc are just a common snap.

On October 29, former minister MK Anwar said (cited from the constitution) that according to the constitution the latest retired chief justice of SC or his last predecessor can only be considered, nothing had been written about 3rd, 4th, etc. Again, former minister Saifur Rahman told that they had considered every option, (including 3rd, 4th, etc.), but everyone of them had refused.

On the other hand, the convener of AL-led 14-party alliance, Abdul Jalil, said that Justice Mahmudul Amin was the legal option according to the constitution. This is where the contradiction occurred.

Notwithstanding the individual (and may be ostensible) citations from the constitution by the political leaders, we want to know what is actually written in the constitution about this particular dispute. Another question is, whether the age of Prof. Iajuddin Ahmed is more than 72 years or not.

Though the aforementioned questions became obsolete with the president taking oath as the chief advisor, I believe it is our privilege to know the truth.

Sifat Mohammad Sayedee
West Brahmondi, Narsingdi Sadar, Narsingdi

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