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Where is ethics today?



We already have been informed by the national dailies that former dictator Ershad is going to join BNP-led four party alliance with a vow to contesting in the upcoming general elections.

Again we can see that there is no ethics in Bangladeshi politics. Supporters and activists of the BNP always claim that their leader was "uncompromising" in the 9-year long movement against Ershad to establish democracy in Bangladesh. We want to know how they are feeling now with the so-called "uncompromising" image! This is very ridiculous.

We are also hearing that Ershad will be president if the four-party alliance goes to power again! This will be very unfortunate for the nation as a whole.

Asif Iqbal, Kazipara, Mirpur, Dhaka

November 7, 1975

What happened on November 7, 1975? We need the historical record on that day straightened out. What actually happened? Who did what to whom and why? From my own research I can tell you, in a nutshell, that there was an uprising of the ordinary soldiers incited by and planned by the Gano Bahini led by Lt Col (Rtd) Taher, a valiant freedom fighter who lost one of his legs in the liberation war.

This uprising was being planned for quite some time and was not an instant reaction to the failed coup of Brigadier Khaled Musharrif, Chief of General Staff (another war hero) of November 3, 1975. Maj Gen Zia, a valiant freedom fighter and the then Chief of Army Staff, did not want to be part of the 3rd November coup and was asked to stay put in his official quarters, a veritable house arrest. It is the members of Gano Bahini which included younger brothers of Col Taher who went to Gen Zia's house to release him.

Ironically, a year later Col Taher was found guilty by a military court for attempting to overthrow the legitimate government of Bangladesh which involved a subsequent coup plot and was sent to the gallows. To celebrate 7/11 as a revolution day minus the memories of Lt. Col (Rtd) Taher is at best a travesty, and at worst, a chapter in the sad history of Bangladesh where facts and truths are buried under myth and falsehood. But what can I say -- we also celebrate our national days (Independence Day, Victory Day) without featuring Bangabandhu!

Habibul Haque Khondker, Ph.D.
On e-mail



Democracy on the brink

For a few days I thought that we had lost it. Having gone through such a hard-hitting struggle to earn man's greatest freedom, it was simply appalling to see us push it back to the brink!

Anyone, including myself, seeing the pictures on our TV screens of the Awami League, the BNP and of course Jamaat waging war against one another, would have been convinced that some one should intervene and at least save the nation from destruction. I feel the major political parties are simply too immature to run the country. First, we have the BNP, with its mischievous scheme to manipulate the neutrality of the caretaker government and the elections. Then we have the Awami League trying to flex its muscles. Then we have that so-called Islamic party Jamaat claiming that all the dead belonged to them. How inhuman!

I don't know whether we'll again go back to that tormenting situation but if we do it'll be the biggest disaster this country has ever faced. It is time for a more mature, honest and liberal set of leaders to pilot Bangladesh through these troubling times and into the future. Let us not kill democracy, let's cherish it. Let us not behave with immaturity; let's behave with maturity. We the people deserve democracy as our fundamental right.

Umran Chowdhury
Gulshan 2, Dhaka

I would request the chiefs of the major political parties of Bangladesh, not to use the word "people" in their speeches. If we look into their speech, and put the respective parties' names instead of the word "people" one can realise, what actually they mean. To the two ladies, please do not think that "people" only belong to your party. The majority is neutral and it is you two, who try to control these general

people with your activities.

That day is not far away when both of you and your party men will pay for your deeds and perhaps then you will get a proper treat for playing with the peace-loving people of Bangladesh.

Saidul Alam
On e-mail

Sheikh Hasina met with the president and also the chief of the caretaker government Professor Yajuddin Ahmed and gave him a list of 11 tasks. She urged him to stop functioning of all private TV channels set up during the last five years. Why does she have such a grudge against the recently set up television channels? May be because these channels are showing how brutally AL activists behaved during the clashes of the last few days. The true face of the AL has been unmasked.

The whole nation was shocked when they saw after beating some Jamaat activists to death AL cadres were hitting them again and again to make sure they were actually dead. The savageness of AL activities remind us of the misdeeds of the AL during its tenure.

We have seen it from the previous election that the caretaker government is neutral to AL if it listens to all that AL says. So there is little possibility that AL will finally accept the president as the caretaker chief.

Robin, On e-mail

The argument that impartiality and neutrality are just gimmicks or utopian concepts does not justify the unruly scenes being created in Bangladesh following the appointment of a caretaker government to ensure free and fair elections to parliament. It is most unfortunate that the present government failed to ensure the acceptability by the opposition of the choice of the person to head the govern-

ment before announcing the name. Now with the rejection of the post by Justice Hasan himself the resultant turmoil looked ridiculous. The only country in South Asia, perhaps, relatively free from chaotic politics for some time, Bangladesh, has also fallen disgracefully.

Dr. Abdul Ruff Colachal
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I am writing regarding the incidents that happened in the streets of Dhaka on 28/29 October. It is obvious that people have different opinions, ideologies but in the name of democracy what we have done in our streets is disgraceful. Were not the victims Bangladeshis, were not they born in Bangladesh?

The media could have played a very effective role to prevent this, but it didn't.

H Rahman, On e-mail

So far I was living with an understanding that some dead people can guide our political course to a great extent. They can even divide the entire nation in two distinct halves. After having felt frustrated for over three decades, now I have learnt to live with it and so have the people of Bangladesh, I guess.

Now I have to live with another frustrating phenomenon, that is, dead people can affect our day-to-day constitution also! Yes, that is what our Attorney General wants us to believe and live with!

If late Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury (May Allah rest his soul in peace) had known that in death, he doesn't take his body into grave only but takes an Article of the sacred Constitution of Bangladesh along with him; I'm sure as a patriotic and prudent Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, as he indeed was, he would have given a 'suo-moto' ruling

detaching this Article of the constitution from his dead body, prior to his retirement.

Yes readers, you got me right, I am talking about Article 58C, (3): "The President shall appoint as Chief Adviser the person who among the retired chief justices of Bangladesh retired last and who is qualified to be appointed as an adviser under this article." Provided that if such retired Chief Justice is not available, or is not willing to hold the office of the Chief Adviser, the President shall appoint as Chief Adviser the person who among the retired Chief Justices of Bangladesh retired next before the last retired Chief Justice.

Let us look at clause (4): "If no retired Chief Justice is available or willing to hold the office of the Chief Adviser, the President shall appoint as Chief Adviser the person who among the retired Judges of the Appellate Division retired last, and who is qualified to be appointed as an Adviser under this article." Provided that if such retired Judge is not available or is not willing to hold the office of the Chief Adviser, the President shall appoint as Chief Adviser the person who among the retired Judges of the Appellate Division retired next before the last such retired Judge.

I'm no expert on the constitution but I do understand plain and simple English language. The opening sentence of clause (4) dispels all misunderstandings about retired CJs when it says, "If no retired Chief Justice is available or is not willing to hold office of the Chief Adviser..." This leaves nobody with any option, let alone AG, to discard any available, willing and qualified retired CJ, of whom we did have one, but unfortunately ignored!

Waliul Haque Khondker
On e-mail

Some questions

We are watching leading lawyers and media denouncing the president for a minor (if any) constitutional violation. But what about the constitutional right of 24 innocent people who got killed during the irresponsible agitation? Do the media, particularly print media, and so-called intellectuals see that those innocent people had the constitutional right to live in this world? Are these lives less important than the minor violation of president's decision to appoint himself as chief of caretaker government? I ask this question to Dr. Kamal Hossain, whom we know as a man of principle.

Why doesn't he speak out for the constitutional right of those people who wanted to live in this world? Editors of much respected dailies are surprisingly silent about the deaths of these people. May I ask another question to Dr. Kamal Hossain? You and Amirul Islam interpreted that Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury is the right per-

son for the chief of caretaker government but former Justice Naimuddin Ahmed and the former attorney general refuted that assertion. In that circumstances, president sought dictation from attorney general's office, which contradicts your opinion. Besides, BNP and other parties don't like Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury. So what was the president's option? Are you telling that despite the opposition from BNP and others, president should have invited Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury to form the caretaker government? I regard you as a 'man of letters' and I respect your opinion that Mahmudul Amin should have been the chief of caretaker government.

The president violated the constitution. But this minor violation was nothing compared to the basic right of those 24 people to live. How do you respond?

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