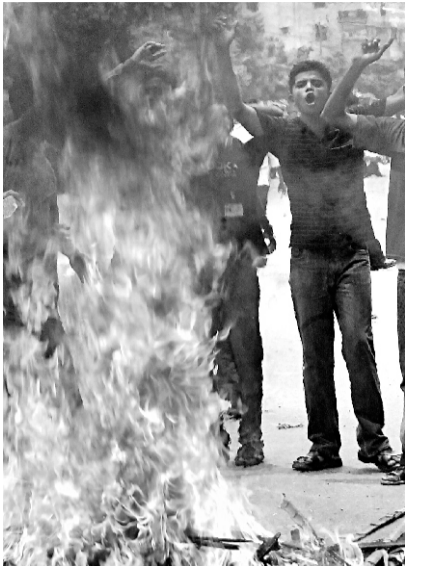
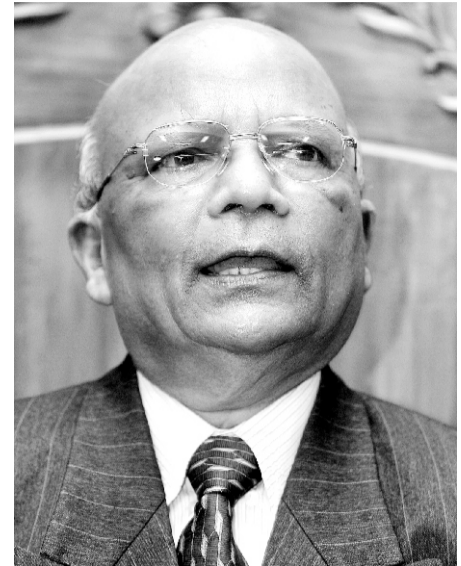


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

# Floating between hope and despair



We the common people are in critical situation in every aspect of our social & personal life. Everyone knows that there is no other alternative way, which can be considered to take Bangladesh forward, except politics. But the current situation is showing how destructive politics can disrupt the daily life of all sorts of people, the future of the private entrepreneurs, both small & large, and how it can waste time, money or life.

We want to believe that the country should follow the constitutional way. Our constitution experts are explaining the different clauses of the constitution in their own ways. So far we couldn't reach the point where everybody would be satisfied. The best way to solve this constitutional problem was to place the different issues to the Supreme Court and work as per the directives of it.

We have merely two & a half months left to hold a free, fair election but we are observing that our political parties are very much busy in activities that will only obstruct the holding of the election.

If we cannot solve all these problems immediately, we will fall into deep trouble, which will bring nothing good to any political party or to the future of the country.

We want to be hopeful that we will not face this kind of a situation. But so far we have no solid ground, which can assure us that our hope would be fulfilled.

**Syed Sarwoer Rashid Subid**  
BSC Engr (EEE)

What is happening to our motherland? Why this political anarchy, who are benefited, who are working from behind the scene to destroy the country's economic, social and political environment in the name of a fair, free election? The are destroying all the political institutions for their own gains.

In the democratic process, election is the main instrument to change the government if the general population feels that the previous government failed to ensure good governance. The 4-party alliance government has quit after the completion of 5 years as ruling party. The immediate past opposition, Awami League, did not play its due legitimate role either in the parliament or in the political arena. The opposition party was also in power, then why didn't it resolve the issues which they are raising now? They did not do that as they were overconfident of getting back to power and they had made all those administrative changes according to their choice and whims and fancy. They thought they would come back to power. They had forgotten that people are the main source of power.

The parties should not forget that we want peace, stability and prosperity. We hope the political parties will play a constructive role to save the country from destruction.

**Rahim**  
Timor leste

The nation is passing through the gravest political crisis. The fourteen-party alliance is demanding the resignation of the CEC but it's almost impossible in a constitutional way. Moreover, the four-party alliance is adamant to see election held under CEC Aziz. If Mr. Aziz resigns and the BNP doesn't accept this resignation under duress and decide to boycott the election, there will be a new problem. Without the BNP and the Awami League the election won't be credible.

Moreover, even if there is an election, as the 14-party alliance blamed the president for violating the constitution, the alliance is unlikely to accept the results if it loses. So before the election is actually held, the two

major parties should agree that they will accept the results.

**Mohammed Giashuddin**  
New York, USA

October 13, 2006, Dr. Md. Yunus and Grameen Bank won the Nobel Peace Prize for the year 2006. The whole nation is proud of this achievement. But the country is far from peaceful now.

The Awami League led 14-party alliance demanded reform of the Election Commission and caretaker government with many other demands. Justice KM Hassan declined to become the caretaker chief but the country had to pass through a grave crisis.

The resignation of the CEC has become a national demand. But he is still hanging on. Is there nobody to save the nation from an impending disaster?

It seems nobody is with us.  
**Md. Maidul Islam**  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

I am very much worried about the political unrest in Bangladesh since the formation of the caretaker government under the leadership of the President. It might sound premature to make any judgment about the caretaker government. But recent activities of the caretaker chief make people suspicious about his role. The BNP led 4-party alliance have put their people everywhere-- from the law enforcing agencies to foreign missions. Their misrule, rampant corruption, politicisation of administration, patronisation of Islamic extremists and distortion of history - all amount to serious failure in governance. They did all these just for their party interests. People voted the BNP to the parliament with great expectations. Now we see they have divided the nation on basic issues, which had been settled long before.

For example, the BNP tried to delete the name of Bangabandhu as the main architect of our independence. But it could never be a successful attempt. As a major political party they should have been more straightforward and forward looking. Begum Khaleda Zia could not go beyond the party interests. The same way they are now backing the chief election commissioner - the person who has lost his credibility.

My appeal to BNP leaders-- please be practical and review your decisions.

**Afsana Haque**  
On e-mail

Mr CEC, how long will you sit on the blood of people? It is not a matter of your personal ego, it is a matter of your motherland (hope you believe Bangladesh is your motherland). No matter how politicised your thoughts and dreams are, I hope you at least possess a bit of sanity. The economy of the country has been shattered. People are dying on the streets to remove you and you are just acting like a brazen-faced politician.

Think again please, what is written in your passport? Are you a Bangladeshi or not? Again, please consider the interests of the country. Please resign, you are not more important than the nation.

**Mubashar Hasan**  
On e-mail

I feel outraged at the passive role of the caretaker government. The blockade called by the 14-party alliance is destroying our economy and creating all sorts of problems for the people. The govt. is responsible for ensuring the well being of public but it is doing nothing. If it continues like this our economy will be destroyed and all our buyers will shift to other countries. May be that's what

this political alliance wants.

If the caretaker govt. can't take care of its responsibilities, it should leave.

**Mashiul**  
On e-mail

For the past few weeks, I have been witnessing the political drama in Bangladesh that fails my understandings of reason, sensibility and humanity. Can the honourable President and Chief Adviser please explain what exactly does he intend to do being the chief of the caretaker government? The time that has passed after his oath taking is quite long, considering the 90-day tenure, but the vital questions concerning the neutrality and fairness of the caretaker government have not been answered. Nor has there been any solution about the CEC. The citizens are being held hostage by the 14-party alliance pushing forward its demands, while the 4-party alliance along with the caretaker government have adopted the principle of "Might is Right". Heated debates dominate the TV screens and day to day conversations but nobody knows how the working class are passing their days without being able to work and earn. What can democracy possibly mean for Bangladesh when the major political rivals forget to shake hands? Why should we vote for people who consider us nothing more than a vote bank? Should the system of governance change or is a change in the political culture required? Who can say what would happen to the family of the people killed by the police truck!

What we suspect is that a third party is taking full advantage of the weakness in governance.

**Syeda Tasneem Towhid**  
University of Dhaka

First of all, let me express my well wishes to you and your newspaper for always speaking out the truth and uttering progressive words of motivation. As I have been keenly observing the political situation for the last few months it seemed to me that in our country the saying, "history repeats itself" is proving to be true again. Regarding the "dialogue" issue I am convinced that the same old dialogue of 1970-71 has taken place once more in the political arena. A plot has been made to cripple us not only politically but also economically. These events are threatening our constitution, our strongest economic proposition, the garment sector. Isn't it the same old plot to threaten our sovereignty? So, as a general viewer, can I draw the same inference that the same quarters are making the same plot of bringing the history back? And would it be foolish to draw the conclusion that they are riding on the back of one of the biggest parties this time? And that's why the progressive people of the biggest party are getting away to form parties like LDP.

If these inferences are true, what should we hope for under the circumstances? Should we only watch what's happening out there? Or should we unite and resist?

**Shuddhasattwa Rafiq**  
Assistant Professor  
Jahangirnagar University

The photograph of the tired girl waiting at Zia International Airport for a ride home (daily star November 14) makes clear the price people are having to pay for the madness of a few. I pray to Allah to grant her and her family safe passage thru the sea of madness that has gripped the capital during the last few days.

The action of the 14 party alliance led by the Awami

League clearly shows that they consider Bangladesh as their fiefdom and the people of Bangladesh pawns in their game.

A party or an alliance that holds the trade and commerce and rights of freedom hostage, burns buses and uproots railroad tracks and then has the audacity to claim that it is being done to protect our democratic rights is nothing but....

With her children enjoying the safety and security of living in the USA, Sheikh Hasina could damn care about the plight of the children (or their parents) in the face

of this blockade. When the political system does not favour them, the Awami League cries "fundamentalism" and resorts to an international smear campaign against Bangladesh abroad and demands intervention of the FBI. Yet when they resort to violence and blockade, they never question their own morals.

**Shomit Chowdhury**  
On e-mail



## What is pulling the president back?



Is the BNP-Jamaat alliance pushing the president to a point of no return?

In last June, when the President was sick and the Speaker was performing the duties of President, there was a huge speculation that the Speaker was going to be the permanent president. The BNP would have two benefits from such an appointment. Firstly, if Awami League did not accept Justice Hasan as caretaker chief,

then the BNP would ultimately conduct the election under the president as it is happening now. The BNP materialized its plan with the exception that the President is Dr. Iajuddin, not Barrister Jamiruddin. Secondly, if the BNP comes to power Barrister Jamiruddin will still remain president for the next five years.

President Iajuddin's current activities are frustrating to not only the people but also to his associate caretaker advisers and even the moderate BNP supporters. Adviser Yasmin Murshed has said that President Iajuddin Ahmed should have acted faster. The statement makes the first and open criticism of the president by an adviser after the four-party coalition transferred power to an interim authority.

What is pulling the 76-year old president back that he is fulfilling all the unlawful demands of the BNP?  
**Khan Jaker**  
Retd Naval Officer

## Dr. Yunus can mediate

The current political crisis in Bangladesh is truly disheartening. It also gives rise to a number of important questions about the future of our democracy. For example, why are the political parties unwilling to cooperate with each other? How long will civilians suffer? And is there a peaceful solution to the current political stalemate?

In response to the first question, it is evident that our political parties have lost their respect for 15 years of democracy. Otherwise, how can one explain the hatred and animosity between the two major political parties? A democracy may entitle everyone to an opinion but it doesn't give us the right to force our opinions on others. Sadly, this is exactly what these parties have been practicing.

This then brings us to the next question, how long the civilians will suffer from such bitterness and intolerance? Probably indefinitely, as we foresee it. The civilians will suffer till the election is held in a calm and peaceful manner; they will then suffer for another five years when one party rejects the election results and the other becomes obsessed with power; they will again suffer when the next caretaker government takes over.

The final question, which is also a necessary one, is whether there is a peaceful solution to the current political crisis. We do not want a solution

that works now but fails to stand the test of time in the long-run. Many practical solutions can emerge if our intelligentsia and hoi polloi put their heads together. Here is a suggestion from someone who has very little idea about politics.

1) We can collectively request a neutral civilian to initiate a dialogue between the two major political parties. Although the recent dialogues between the two major parties have been unsuccessful, we still need to keep trying for the sake of our democracy. Perhaps the only individual in this country who is equally respected by people from all walks of life is Dr. Yunus. Given his unbridled love for Bangladesh and his strong commitment to peace, we can sincerely hope that he will agree to do the job.

2) Once he agrees, Dr. Yunus can act as the mediator between the representatives from all political parties and urge them to draw a list of demands that is acceptable to the majority. With an eye to the future, he can also ask the political parties to formulate a set of acceptable guidelines about the Election Commission and caretaker government so that the current circumstance does not repeat itself in the future.

3) Dr. Yunus can then present the list of demands and guidelines to the appropriate authorities for immediate implementation. After the elections



are held, these guidelines can also be incorporated within the constitution.

Of course, these arguments assume that (a) Dr. Yunus will be willing to accept this great responsibility, and (b) the political parties will come to agree on key issues. Let us scrutinize these assumptions further.

First, can we blame Dr. Yunus if he chooses not to tarnish his image by getting embroiled in the dirty world of politics? Of course not.

However, if he chooses to mediate, he will only gain more respect for taking on this onerous task. His involvement will be welcome, since he will be mediating, rather than meddling with the politicians. His role will

be to continue the dialogue until a realistic solution is found. Until then, the politicians can suspend blockades, hartals, or even elections. The country can run at its own pace without any interruption from the political stranglehold.

Second, how do we know that the political parties will ever come to an agreement? Well, we do not have any choice. We HAVE to strive for a solution through dialogue, otherwise the agenda of violence and vendetta will continue in the future. Suppose the current standoff continues until one political party succeeds in imposing its views on the other political party and wins the election. Does it ensure that

there will be no further violence in the lead-up to the elections in the future? It simply doesn't. As said earlier, a democracy does not give us the right to force our opinions on others. Consequently, any solution reached through coercion and violence will only lead to greater problems in the future.

**H. Faruq**  
On e-mail

When I heard the news of Dr. Yunus getting the Nobel Peace Prize I was at an iftar party at Purana Dhaka and I got so excited that I stood up and hugged my friend. The thought came to my mind that finally we achieved something after '71 (leaving cricket aside). So when we were heading towards serious political unrest the thought of Dr. Yunus doing something came to all our minds. Well we all know that you are an economist/banker not a politician but we all believed that you had the power to align us in a line.

Unfortunately, no such thing happened. We knew you were an economist but wanted to believe that you could be much more. We hoped you would play an active role in bringing the country back to the path of peace and stability.

**M. Ashique Hassan Ayan**  
Architecture, NSU