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Bangladesh politics

As a foreigner having lived in Bangladesh for almost four years, I am appalled at the current situation in the country. The leaders of the two main parties only care about regaining power so that they can reap all benefits that come by the country being one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Bangladesh, we call it a democracy, yet you are allowing the politicians to instigate chaos and violence that are ruining our lives! The only difference between Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina are the two acronyms of their respective parties. Does it really matter who comes to power in January? Do you think your daily lives and general suffering will be alleviated by either of these two politicians who make empty promises and play the blame game? It is time to wake up Bangladesh! Show the two leading parties that in a democracy it is the people's voices that count. Oppose their programmes by going about your daily lives as if there was no blockade. Go to work, make your deliveries, and attend your classes. Show the leaders that you will no longer play their sick games and partake in hartals and blockades. In the end, I pray that a fresh new leader, not from either party, will take up your cause and follow you with foresight and integrity.

GNK
Dhaka

The shrewd political brilliance of BNP is paying dividends for them as they are suc-

cessfully on the way to what they had planned in this crucial interregnum of the caretaker government.

The AL is now in a very critical position as the obtaining situation is not at all in its favour. They have to cry for neutrality finding no way out. The BNP has manipulated the situation very cunningly and this is where the AL has been beaten by BNP's political shrewdness. BNP knew well that this is a very busy time for the nation, particularly for the educational institutions. University admission tests, test exams for HSC and SSC examinees along with the annual exams of schools are on. It is a very crucial season also for the poor people as winter makes life even more difficult for them. The situation influences the parents too and they are naturally much disturbed now, and this has helped BNP to raise their voice against 'public predicaments.'

The season is by no means appropriate for political activism but AL is forced to indulge in it since they have few options. Though some people raise the question why 'blockade' is the only option, I want to draw their attention whether there was any other option left to see the back of the stubborn M. A. Aziz or force K. M. Hasan not to take up the post? Invisible strings are controlling the whole administrative machinery including the Chief Adviser and Election Commission. On this very point AL

must endure criticism, because what they are doing only increases the difficulty of the common people. They must have thought the matter carefully through, before launching their protest against election engineering, with political wisdom. It can be said that the AL had taken BNP lightly as a contender unlike the BNP.

The whole nation is uncertain still about holding a free and fair election in Bangladesh, but the question must be asked whether AL's political shrewdness is a thing of the past

Md. Maidul Islam
University of Dhaka

I could not say enough about prospect and potential of Bangladesh. Our people are caring, honest and hard working. They admire and appreciate education. Entrepreneurs are everywhere! They have dreams and work hard to achieve it. When dealing with foreign counterparts, they are diligent, cordial, schedule concise and dedicated. As a business executive, my experience with them is excellent. They never want handout, just looking for a chance. Chance to prove; chance to learn.

My request to our leading social experts and media reporters is to guide the ill-fated out-dated politicians to pursue non-violence approach to overcome current political crisis.

How could any political parties allow 10-12 years old kids dancing on the street or throwing rocks at police? Those kids should be in the school!

I would like to see political parties engage in social work. They should pursue voters with development plan. If our politicians can motivate people to create anarchy, they can also motivate them to do good work. Let them be like those entrepreneurs.

Engr. Md. Zaman, P.E., M.B.A.

California, USA

The blockade programme called by the 14-party alliance has caused heavy damage to the country's economy, enormous sufferings to the education sector at the time of examination and admission period, working people had to take risk of their lives and spend huge amount for transport, not to speak of the people attending patients at hospitals and clinics and requiring medical treatment, the poor working class including day labourers, and so many small or big business people could not earn their living.

This is not a situation where people have to sacrifice so heavily. If the 11-point demands are met, it will only benefit one section of politicians to go to power. It will be of no benefit to commoners, because we have seen in the past the activities of most of the major political parties while they were in power. Why should we common people suffer so much? In the name of establishing environment for free and fair election, the political parties are not supposed to call this sort of hartal-blockade. In the name of upholding one constitutional right, other is being denied.

The Caretaker Government is supposed to honour the civil and constitutional rights of all citizens of the country, not only those of few aspiring political persons.

Dr. Mohammad Abdus Hai



Department of Chemistry Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka

Again blockade! Agitation, street violence and endless sufferings for commuters! One is ashamed to mention that when people are suffering due to this, cheering parody and awful dances by the politician raise the question in our minds as to what they really want? Is it democracy? We can't think that in the 21st century politician can behave in this manner.

Unfortunately, we are heading towards another period of uncertainty due to the political rivalry between the AL and BNP. Neither of these two major parties practices democracy within their own party. Otherwise, how every year Khaleda and Hasina become party presidents? Somebody else should come in front. It is matter of shame that the red-capped mayor, Mohiuddin, has always been against any development of Chittagong Port, and AL had been supporting him. Does the AL think that by doing so it will be benefited?

In the name of democracy blockade of Chittagong Port will not be acceptable. Hasina has to realize it. We can't pay the penalty for ships at outer anchorage waiting to be unloaded. Alternatively, Mongla Port needs to be made more effective too. This is the time we need to sit together for our betterment. The two Rahman dynasties need not to be in power any more. We the majority of the people want peace and development. We want our country to progress and compete with the outside world. We want our kids to get proper uninterrupted education. Farmers must get the right price for their crops. Day labourers must earn their daily wages. Please, Ms. Hasina and Khaleda don't think we are fools. We know what you want. Please don't

make us hostage. You have done enough. Don't divert foreign investment by blockade.

W. Islam

On e-mail

No one else, but the Awami League (AL) leaders and the 14-party combine for that fateful day when people killed their own brethren by beating mercilessly exceeding all the limits of cruelty! Thank you for publishing the true stories written by some letter writers who described the savage act of some look-a-like human beings. Thanks to Ajit Kr. Roy (DS Nov.01, '06) for expressing his indignation very frankly. Yes, the first to share the blame are the President and General Secretary of the AL, who incited and instigated their followers to lay siege to Dhaka with sticks and poles. They should be made to account for this, and then the beastly characters should be tracked with the help of the TV footages and tried for killing innocent people. I also hail the writer for reminding the Bangladeshis, whose memories are short lived, how brutal and savage were the members of Rakkhi Bahini in 1973, which used to catch innocents and kill them! Let us (all the helpless) pray to Almighty Allah for salvation of this unfortunate nation but not repeat mockeries (like the AL who are so good in composing sentimental statements after such killings) and shed crocodile tears!

AF Rahman
On e-mail

It appears to me and perhaps to most of the neutral observers that the two ladies are fighting with their goons and in the process the poor people of Bangladesh are becoming victims. The two ladies are simply not paying attention to the loss people are suffering. Are they worthy of anyone's votes? The people of Bangladesh should find a way out to teach these two a lesson of their lives by simply rejecting both of them.

I think the best person suited to the development of Bangladesh is Mr. Mohammed Yunus, the Nobel Laureate. Could he be brought to do some extra good work for the people of Bangladesh? The whole world will appreciate that.

Anis Mohiuddin
Kolkata

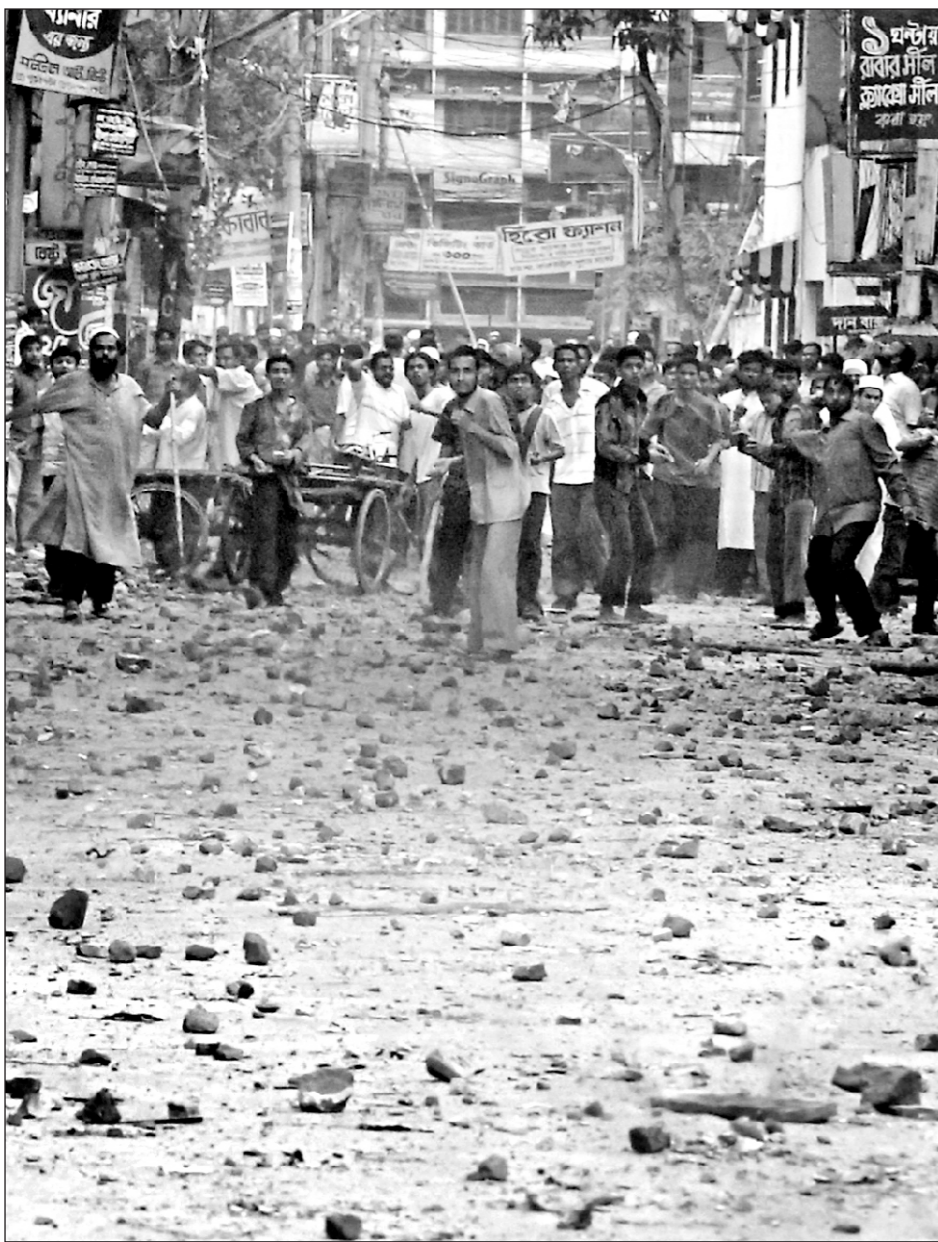
As a conscientious and tormented citizen of the country, I believe it is time we came out of the quagmire of such unholy, mistrustful and confrontational politics that is chipping away at the development we have achieved, and vitality we have attained so far.

The answer to our quest for a peaceful developing society does not lie in the removal of Justice MAAziz, the CEC, or the CA. Even if we did so, we would still have to face the same uncertainty, if not after five years then surely within the next ten.

What we need is a national government comprising people from all walks of life for a limited period of time. Its task would be to ensure separation of the judiciary and autonomy of the Election Commission (EC), at the earliest. The EC must be made totally independent of the executive and given the power to frame and execute electoral laws as per the provisions of the constitution. Alongside this, it is also extremely important to make the ACC truly independent and functional. To legitimise this the national government should also go for a referendum and also propose to abolish the 13th amendment, which the subsequently elected government would carry out as per the mandate of the people.

I believe, this could and would be a workable solution to make democracy work in a peaceful atmosphere and ensure prosperity of the nation.

S. K Chakraborty
On e-mail



Leakage of MBBS question

The nation has once again witnessed a nasty game with the future of our brightest students through leakage of question paper for their MBBS admission test held on 17 November 2006. My eldest daughter who was a student of Viharunnisa Noon College appeared before the test and after coming out of the examination expressed her humble dissatisfaction to me saying that she would probably not get the chance although she did well in the test. While I asked the reason, she told of the leakage of question paper. She said that many people reportedly bought a piece of question paper even at the cost of Tk. 1,500 from the Nilkhet market the night before the examination was held. She said 100% question was leaked and the students who got it scored 100% right. But the students like my daughter hardly could correctly answer 80%. As a result, most of her classmates including herself did not get chance in any of the 14 Medical Colleges though all of them got GPA 5 both in their SSC and HSC examinations.

The news of the leakage of question paper has also come out in the Prothom Alo. The Prothom Alo reported that a group of brilliant students had staged a demonstration in front of the National Press Club with a demand to cancel the MBBS admission test result immediately.

On behalf of my daughter and those hapless students, I urge the honourable Adviser concerned to the Caretaker Government to please make a judicial inquiry to find out the fact and culprits and cancel the test result and announce a fresh date of admis-

sion test. Please set an example of judgement and make the way clear for the real brilliant students to contribute for the nation.

Md. Sirajul Islam Molla
Green Road, Dhaka

Place for a loser!

After such an embarrassing defeat in the recently held mid-term election, US President Bush seems to be in real trouble. He might even face impeachment. Now, if Bush really gets impeached, it will be just uncomfortable for him to live in America. Wherever he will go, people will give him bad looks. Which country Bush needs to emigrate? The only country Bush knows to be convenient in is Britain! But with all the bad news about immigration in the UK, the British passport control may not let Bush be in their country. So what is Bush going to do? Well, this is where my uncle from Bangladesh comes in shosurbari.

My uncle, who is in his fifties, has convinced himself that he doesn't need to work anymore. He has no family and hence not much expense, but he doesn't have any savings either. He doesn't seem to care that one day he is going to get very old and ill and then he will need a lot of money. But that doesn't mean my uncle isn't busy. We all know that those people in Bangladesh who don't have any work are busier than those who have! So my uncle keeps himself busy by going to our Dera Bazaar and spending all day in different tea stalls, gossiping about nothing. But he is not the only one; there are many others like him, doing exactly the same thing.

You get all sorts of people in tea stalls in Bangladesh. And you also get a lot of 'ukil' (middleman). My uncle tells me that recently he

came across a good, reliable middleman, who knows a family in London. That family knows a good, educated, 'citizen lady', in her late forties, in Birmingham! The bride, or would-be bride, is excellent when it comes to Bengali cooking. She makes some finger-licking fish kebabs we have been assured. The immigration guys would then think twice over to say no.

Azad Miah
Oldham, UK

Al Jazeera and our cable operator

A few days ago, I called up my cable operator at Gulshan, requesting him to include the newly launched English TV channel of Al-Jazeera. I was hoping that the cable guy would be happy to hear my request. To my surprise, he was deeply sad and frustrated by my request. He said, 'we cannot give you that Bhai, because Al Jazeera's Arabic channel is so damn popular that we cannot even think of another English channel in Dhaka. Bhai, why don't you watch other channels such as BBC, CNN, Sky News etc?'

I was quite flabbergasted by this sweeping order. I thought I must be a fool and ignorant that I even don't know Bengalis have become so fluent in Arabic that they don't want the Al Jazeera's English channel!

Ekram Kabir
Gulshan, Dhaka

Avoid traumatising photos in posters

Some days ago when I was going along the road below the Shahjahanpur flyover, a shocking election poster on the pillar drew my attention. It showed up a person killed as symbol of the five years' tenure of bad governance of

the 4-party alliance govt. In the photo, which raised horrific impression mainly instead of sympathy, the gray matter of the victim had come out of the gory skull.

I was mostly afraid thinking of our children lot of school-going students pass through this road everyday, that how they were taking it. It is a very common matter that every party, not only in the time of election but throughout the year, is much interested to display posters those contain ghastly scenes of killed or injured people which are arrant shocking to people of all age. On behalf of all common citizens, I would request all our parties to be restrained from this doing.

Maidul Islam
On e-mail

Ah security!

The other day, a few people ordinary citizens were having an evening out at Dhaka kebab at Banani road number 11. We don't have too many places to go in this grim, sad capital. Suddenly, police and other security officials started banging the cars parked in front of the kebab outlet with their batons and asking the people who were having their food inside to remove their cars from there. Why? BNP Chairperson would pass through that place on her way to somewhere from the Hawa Bhaban. Therefore, the police started hitting the cars for ensuring security.

What are we? A group of stupid fools? This is very much annoying that the government has to ensure her security at the cost of the people's property? I don't know if there's such a country on earth that does this type of things. Why did the government give permission to set up eating outlets at that road then? If you want to secure the

place, you can search all the cars that were parked around that place; you needn't hit the cars for that purpose. This proves that we live like second-class citizens in our own country.

In this context, we recall how Sheikh Hasina wanted to make the Gonobhaban her permanent address just before she went out of power.

Are they thinking the entire population as parasites; do you know that?

A citizen of Bangladesh
Dhaka

Grameenphone logo

My attention was brought to a letter in your 'Letters to the Editor' page commenting on Grameenphone's new logo. While I am of the same opinion with the writer that the colours of the old logo was more patriotic in its green and red, I must disagree with his opinion that the logo should be changed back. GP's new logo gives the company a more modern and fresh look, as the old logo looked very outdated with the mobile phone larger than the head!

I have been a GP subscriber for long nine years and I think the company has been providing better and better service over the years, this new image looks to me like the company is going to give more international standard service.

I congratulate GP on reaching 10 million subscribers and for completion of 10 years of service and feel they are refreshed for the next 10 years with the new logo!

Jagjur A. Rahman
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Don't blame the media

None has forgotten the incident of Bangla Bhai. When the media unveiled his destructive activities, a former minister told, 'Bangla Bhai is the creation of media.' Later on we found that the then BNP led government had to admit their fault. Recently the former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia also blamed the media in the same manner. She said that price spiral was a creation of media. I don't know what she thinks about us, the common people. Doesn't she think that people are more concerned of all the matters nowadays? The media, which she is blaming, are playing a vital role to keep all of us up-to-date. If they had given us wrong information regarding price hike we would have shown our backs to the media. In fact what media has presented before us regarding price hike is absolutely true. How can the former PM deny the fault of her government in this way? It will be a great example if she apologises to the media for her wrong statement.

Tareq Bin Ali
North South University, Dhaka

