

If You Chew it, then Why Not Swallow?

The circumstances and evidences, thus, lead us to live with the impression that the government has already been chewing the ideas of the opposition but is hardly attempting to swallow them.

The nation can hardly accommodate the ramps and rampages that are being revealed or are in the offing in the days to come.

A Long Step Forward

In a turning-point address to the nation last evening, interspersed with a summation of her government's achievements during its stormy tenure, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia informed us all that she has advised the President to dissolve the fifth Jatiya Sangsad.

In response to the PM's recommendations, the President has dissolved the parliament and the Prime Minister has been asked to continue in a caretaking capacity in accord with a constitutional provision applicable under such circumstances.

In such a situation, we urge all concerned to behave responsibly and with extreme prudence. Basically, one of the major demands of the opposition has been met in that the parliament stands dissolved now.

The repudiation of the by-elections is a concrete step forward in the direction of rendering the atmosphere conducive to the staging of a meaningful dialogue to ensure participation of all political parties in the next national elections.

Building on all these positive trends, the political parties must now come to an agreement to broadbase the general elections under a mutually agreed interim arrangement.

Field-day for Tyranny

The much feared showdown, certain to take place on either Tuesday or Wednesday, did not materialise between opposing terrorist groups of Missionpara and Chashara in Narayanganj.

Corruption, graft and bribery mainly, have long been institutionalised in this country. But there is still something against making a public show of it. And this keeps up a hope that some social power would come and dismantle this infernal machine.

What did that highminded organisation, the LGED under a rare upright and farsighted chief, succumb to? Or the businessmen of Narayanganj? To the clout backed by the party in power, the power of treating all norms of civilised being — from decency to law, fairness to accommodation — with contempt?

But what can the officers and the businessmen do? And what even the police can do to counter this? Cannot the government and the ruling party restrain the boys from visible criminal acts? Perhaps not. If they could, campuses would long have been healed of violence.

Passing of a Diffident One

When he came to journalism he was both unprepared for the job and past the green stage when it is hard to take in unknown tricks of the trade. But Lutfor was a mettlesome one with an ever inquisitive mind.

With Lutfor Rahman's death on Tuesday only a few will be there in Bangladesh journalism making a mark without any academic stamp to help. Lutfor was then again very special even among that endangered and shrinking species in that — without any academic training in it — he loved mathematics to distraction.

His prejournalism origins lay in mists of some populist kind of activist politics. What he learnt there he carried into his death — diffidence, thrift, simplicity. It was a definite loss to journalism when he had to leave to join the PIB. He was even there doing his best to enrich journalism through broadening training and research needs of the profession.

Sixty-three is not a mature age to die. We mourn his death and send our condolences to the bereaved family.

At long last, burying all gossips and expectations the Election Commission (EC) declared election schedules for 143 parliamentary seats vacated earlier by the resignations of the opposition members from the parliament.

We would not like to relish on presenting arguments for and against the formation of a caretaker government for which much blood and ink have already been shed. It is also not, perhaps, useful either at this moment.

The Prime Minister appealed to the opposition to participate in the ensuing by-elections and thus to delete some of the 'mistakes/crisis baked by the opposition itself'. She, further, proposed for the formation of a national government without, of course, hinting at any of its modalities.

Testing the Legendary Patience of Bangladeshi People?

PROBABLY a lot that needed to be said has already been said, here and there, by various commentators. The Awami League (AL), perhaps desperately short of any ideas or well considered positions on issues, finally hit upon one which the equally desperate (though for entirely different reasons) Jatiya Party (JP) and Jamaat could latch onto.

The leading ladies are testing the legendary patience of the Bangladeshi people, on the quite flawed premise of a God-given right to power without the commensurate responsibility. The patience is not endless.

In fact, I have never understood why the AL did not challenge the BNP government to take the caretaker issue to the people through a referendum. Surely, given the strong possibility that a majority of people would support the idea of neutral administration conducting elections, the BNP would not dare to hold such a referendum and would be put on the defensive.

As one of the major sources of legitimacy is being ignored, and the BNP's parliamentary majority is being touted instead. Even this 'majority' is based on the indirectly elected women's seats. The BNP has no simple majority on the basis of directly elected seats, while in terms of votes cast, BNP polled less than one third of the total potential votes.

To the Editor...

Dubbed serials Sir, Would you believe that Larry Hagman (famous J R Ewing of Dallas) speaks fluent Hindi! If you are not convinced, please watch I Dream of Jeannie on Sony ET channel.

The epic movie Brave Heart, which had its world premier in September, is being dubbed in Hindi in India.

These are done to cater to a wider range of viewers who do not read, write, speak or understand English. The primary consideration is to sell a product to the maximum consumers watching TV. Those who spend millions for marketing and manufacturing of targeted for ordinary consumers, are not supposed to be responsible for teaching English to the already English-knowing viewers.

Another thing I like to point out is that the frequency of hartals increases during the end of the year. Although the politicians may find the weather pleasing and favourable for their hartal activities, they shouldn't forget that students have final examinations during this time. Last year, O' and A' Level candidates had to sit for their exams at 2 am!

Hartals and schools Sir, For the past ten years or so the people of this country have experienced enough hartals. The most affected by

these activities are the students. A few years ago, there were one-day or half-day hartals and these caused severe interruptions in the academic life of the students.

Distorted history Sir, I like to draw the attention of Ms Shrabonti Ali and also numerous readers to her article under the caption, 'Independence War of

its eagerness to talk with the opposition on the issue. Besides the Magura and other election episodes as cited by the opposition in support of a non-political government at the helm of election affairs, some of the most recent empirical evidence also sharply point at the necessity of a non-political government. For example, it is reported by the newspapers and alleged by

Beneath the Surface

by Abdul Bayes



The critics that the PM has already started her election campaign using public resources. As a PM, she begged votes for a particular candidate in Dimla the other day. She asked people to vote for her candidate (who is incidentally her nephew) if they wanted development of that constituency. Experts tend to opine that such promises are not in consort with EC rules.

Testing the Legendary Patience of Bangladeshi People?

power and its abuse would be under control, and the people's voice would genuinely carry more weight.

The BNP government often refers to the post liberation AL regime as having destroyed democracy. Right. But Bangabandhu was very much within the Constitution when he amended it with a two-thirds majority to usher in his version of an authoritarian one-party state. The problem was he violated the spirit of the Constitution and ignored the wishes of the people in the process (which happens very rarely in a mature democracy) and paid the price for trying to shut out not only other political parties but, more importantly, larger sections of society.

The politicians would do well to heed the dangers of pushing the people beyond breaking point.

The extreme concentration of power in single political party, as in fascist and communist structures, has not stood the test of time. Similarly BNP's avowed dogma of sticking to the Constitution or upholding it does not hold water where a majority of political representatives and the people themselves are known to hold different views. No body in his right mind, after observing the current events in Bangladesh, would suggest that the political system is anything but immature, lending greater credibility to the need for at least a few successive elections to be held under neutral administrations.

As far as anyone could see, all that the AL had to do was to make the right noises about corruption, mismanagement and other failures of the BNP government, while presenting some policies of its own; the AL could conceivably coast in on the BNP's failures and its own credibility as a superior alternative government. Instead the AL has managed to reinforce a chaotic rudderless image of itself in the process making the BNP look good by comparison. It seems obvious that the whole sequence of boycotting the parliament,

the poor economic conditions of the majority of the people behind the plough!

I would better suggest the World Bank to please review their previous suggestions to withdraw subsidy from the agri-sector. There are enough reasons to believe that re-introduction of subsidy in the agri-sector will increase productivity.

SA Baker 16/A, Dillu Road, Dhaka

Revamping agriculture Sir, Recently in a seminar organised jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and the World Bank it has been revealed that the country's agriculture sector is presently performing not very well.

He joined the Muslim League much after its formation in Dhaka in 1906. Rather, Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Haque was one of the founder-members of Muslim League. There has been no mention of some other important events like Lahore Resolution of 1940 in which there was initially provisions of sovereign states for the Muslims of India.

I have pointed out these only with the intention of informing the people who are not well aware of the facts and for correct information of younger generation. Finally, I shall request the writers as well as others to

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Politics and development Sir, Our country has not progressed appreciably in the past twenty-four years. Political instability is one of the main reasons why we are lagging behind the other South Asian countries.

One thing I wish to ask our political leaders is how are they going to develop our country if they spend most of their time vying for power? Can any of these leaders who create political crisis say for sure that if he or she comes to power our country would achieve an appreciable progress? And can they guar-

The ruling party's concern for constitutional means deserves mention and appreciation. But a peep deep into some of the proposals that originated from their side of the fence, tends to convey us that those proposals also do not seem constitutional. For example, if a resignation before 90 days stands unfriendly to the constitution, then how come 30 days conform to the constitution? Second, the latest proposal of the PM relating to the formation of a national government, according to many, also does not appear to be in tune with any provisions of the constitution.

The circumstances and evidences, thus, lead us to live with the impression that the government has already been chewing the ideas of the opposition but is hardly attempting to swallow them. This might be due to the 'ego' that pervasively prevails in today's politics. But, nevertheless, one should credit the ruling party for a crawling from its original stand of no-resignation and no-cooperation.

The politicians would do well to heed the dangers of pushing the people beyond breaking point. Their livelihoods would be more seriously affected than the general populace's if the current political system breaks down and people have to turn to other alternatives. After all, the periods of genuine politician dominated government have not been particularly successful or long-lived. The two major parties must have more to say for themselves than simply that they are better than the other, when both are doing so miserably. Surely the hapless Bangladeshis deserve something better after 25 years of being let down by the leadership of the country!

The writer is Associate Professor, IBA, Dhaka University.

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civil service all jostling for access to power, constitutionally sanctioned or otherwise, from which position they get a window of opportunity to lord it over and otherwise, as it is, oppress the voters. The concept of the popular opinion, i.e. the opinions of the represented, the original font of power, constraining the actions of those entrusted with the office and responsibilities of government, appears to have been marginalised. The people's representatives are voted into office to manage the task of governance to the best of their abilities i.e. to perform a job at the expense and direction of their bosses — the taxpayers and the people at large. Can we the people at least expect that the rhetoric of power politics be moderated so that politicians strive 'for office' rather than strive 'for power'?

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