

Caretaker government issue



As a voter I feel that the constitution of the caretaker government concept may be reviewed, not because the opposition is demanding it, but because we have learnt by actual experience how it works, weak spots in the system, and how to improve its performance.

Theoretically, the top post is open only to one category of candidate (the last retiring CJ). There should be more options for the choice. Better to have a short-listed list of candidates than only the person who is theoretically qualified. These

days the political polarisation is so acute that it is difficult to arrive at a consensus at the national level. The current political culture is neither mature, not it gets the benefit of the doubt. Now black money, terrorism and religion have entered politics. Note the high cost of politicking, and the dubious means adopted thereafter for recovering the huge expenses. The boundary conditions have to be clear and positive.

Under the circumstances, the powers of the head of CTG needs a review, to prevent

interference, directly or indirectly, and unfair means. The support mechanisms have to be monitored rigidly. The effect of the election remains in effect for the next five years. It is risky, if the negative implications are very much noticeable.

The regime has to be more flexible in its approach to the issue. Time is a great 'revealer'. We live and learn. Why the politicians in power are scared? **Alfa Ahmad, Dhaka**

When the question of caretaker administration arises, it leads

me to believe that the core issue lies in the unilateral and mutual distrust. There was no caretaker administration in the 1970 general elections when the Awami league was swept to majority. The same happened in the 1973 elections. While we are supposed to be mature enough to continue the process of true democracy, we have been plagued by the phobia of distrust. This distrust has resulted in the amendment of constitution after boycott of elections and prolonged hartals. These hartals cost Bangladesh heavily.

In the developed democracies and even in our neighbouring country, India, which is the most populous democracy in the world, there is no question of caretaker administration. In a democracy, the voters will vote in or out the party based on their deeds and with a hope for better governance in future. Can't we adjust ourselves with the trust and belief where the question of manipulation of election results by way of vote rigging, influencing the voters, resorting to hartals etc. will not arise?

Can't we leave the voters with their own decisions to choose the political parties that they wish to govern the country, instead of thinking too much about the caretaker administration under which three elections have already been held? Let us learn to accept the verdict of the people and concede. Is not it

possible for the losing party to congratulate the winning party in the election in Bangladesh like in the US, where an institutionalised political system is working and prevailing for a long time?

Tifomas Gomes
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The clash between the Awami League and the BNP over caretaker government system must be resolved.

The Awami League took part in the provincial election 1954 under the Muslim League Chief Minister, Nurul Amin, of the then East Pakistan government. The Awami League also participated in the 1970 general elections under the aegis of the military junta headed by the notorious General, Yahya Khan. It won the elections of 1970 overwhelmingly.

After the war of liberation and independence of our country Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman did not make any provision in the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for caretaker government.

The caretaker government was incorporated in our constitution by the then BNP government in the year 1996.

Jamaat-e-Islami leaders claim that Prof. Golam Azam is the exponent of the caretaker government. The Awami League leaders claim that it is



on their initiative that the system was inducted in our constitution in 1996.

After winning the 1996 general election under the caretaker government system, Awami League President Sheikh Hasina was ebullient and very happy and as prime minister she said that the system was the best in the world and it could serve as a model for other countries to hold a free, fair and neutral general election.

Now when the scheduled general elections of our country are due next year, 2006, Awami

League leaders have not only threatened to boycott the elections but also vowed to resist the holding of the election if the system is not reformed.

Such talk of 'reform' and 'no reform' in the caretaker government system by the leaders of our two major political parties is really pushing us towards uncertainty.

What do the Awami League leaders really want? Why did not they suggest anything, any reform or amendment in the caretaker government system when they were in power from

1996 to 2001? Further, why have they failed till this day to place before the countrymen any foolproof, specific or concrete reform proposal for amendment or change in the caretaker government system, powers and functions of the chief adviser/head of the caretaker government and independence of the Election Commission?

Time is running out. We must resolve the issue before it is too late.

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Kibria killing and al-Qaeda

Recently, the government sources hinted at the possible al-Qaeda connection in the assassination of SAMS Kibria. This seems to be a big puzzle to me! All the chargesheeted people in Kibria killing case belong to the ruling BNP.

Does it mean that there are al-Qaeda elements within that party? **Jewel Ahmed, Basabo, Dhaka**



JU English Dept

It is needless to offer any preamble on the "Session Jams" in the public universities of Bangladesh. It is now a household word.

As a student of the Department of English at JU, I'd like to sketch a pen picture of our department. I have been here for a couple of years. In this short period of time I've noticed lots of incompatibilities in the department. Teachers control everything. Obviously, teachers are supposed to have that kind of authority. Unfortunately, not all teachers are equally dedicated to their noble job. You must have realised what I am trying to say.

Classes are not held regularly, courses can't be wrapped up in time. So exams are delayed. And we, students, have to suffer for all these lapses. Above all, publication of results takes an indefinite period of time.

Who will look into all these anomalies? **SK, JU**

Excellent analysis

The article by Zafar Sobhan is an excellent analysis of the pros and cons of having a good relationship with India. As mentioned in the end, we not only need to evaluate how maintaining a belligerent relationship with India is not benefiting us in the long run, but also we could look at the western world. The European countries already have a single currency and the American continent has long been using this approach proposed by India. This has led to economic growth of many neighbours of the US and also helped the massive US industries.

Yes, we should wake up and smell the coffee. It is way past due for Bangladesh to start acting like a modern state that is more interested in economic growth than political gains. We should also think whether we are really a free state from the economic point of view.

Imran M. Khan, University of California San Diego La Jolla, CA

Plundering of trees

Local people have reported that about 300 trees on Purapara Sarok, 90 trees on Jadabpur Sarok, and another 70 on Bhoiob Sarak have been cut down. Villagers also said that the average price of a tree is about Tk 1,000 to 1,500. But the upazila officials decided to sell them for much lower prices. The local people failed to protect the trees because government employees and officials were directly involved in the plundering.

The government department concerned should immediately look into the matter.

Titumir, Jhenidah

Pale face of DU

Once Dhaka University was famous for its academic excellence and achieved the reputation of being the Oxford of the East. Then high educational standards, role in progressive movements, extra

glorious history of the university.

But now the situation is very different. The university is affected by malfunctioning in almost every area.

Can we regain our lost glory? **M.A.A. Nazim**
Dept of Political Studies
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Press freedom

The journalists of this country, having more than seven hundred dailies, are very vocal about press freedom; some of them occasionally advise the government to do 'more to protect press freedom.' 'Freedom of the press, democracy and human rights' are much sought after things where they are absent. It is assumed that people would feel the sweet taste of life if they enjoy those conditions existing in a society.

The newspaper readers of Bangladesh have thus started thinking that the press is their 'well-wisher' and the people in power are 'unsympathetic' to their interests. It is a fact that in a developing country like ours, the government always faces critical scrutiny of its actions because of the failure to fulfil people's expectations. The press, on the other hand, as a 'well-wisher' of the people does not hesitate to critically evaluate the government actions, directly or indirectly accusing and advising the people's representatives off and on.

If we take stock of the last six months and the accusations made by the press against the public leaders and elected representatives, it will constitute some volumes. But the critical comments made by some elected representatives against newspapers are few. Yet the press continues publishing critical writings against the elected representatives. Such a state of affairs can be attributed to the freedom of the press. The learned journalists should accept the truth sincerely. Otherwise, they may be accused of not having the courage to appreciate the reality or not having their eyes and hearts open. Indeed, there is none to advise the press to practise self-criticism.

I sincerely feel, there will be no conflict between the press and the

ruling class if the 'professional and objective' role is pursued by the press.

Osman Karim
Kakrail, Dhaka

Land grabbing

Land grabbing, loan defaulting, non-effectiveness of parliament, ailing condition of democracy, widespread corruption, white collar cheating, tax dodging, soaring prices of the essentials, government's contemplation to further increase the prices of gas, kerosene diesel etc. have now become burning issues. We have so many political parties. They are to voice the grievances of the common people. But unfortunately in most of the issues we do not hear the voices of the political parties. We hear their voices on political issues only. They demand the government to step down. They want hartal etc. etc. These voices we no more want to hear. We want to hear the voices which will give us peace, prosperity and equality before the law and other rights that we are entitled to. Some lawmakers have reportedly grabbed lands. They grabbed power and power grabbed the lands.

We attentively hear the words of these land grabbers. We salute the loan defaulters. We make them preside over functions of different kinds. We garland them. Now we should think twice before paying our respect to such people. Thanks to the DS for its attempt to bring the cat out of the bag and to unearth so many facts about those people. It is the media which helped unearth the "Watergate Scandal" that ultimately forced Richard Nixon to step down from US presidency.

We hope investigative reports of The Daily Star will help create awareness regarding different social maladies.

Tapader Md Khalilur Rahman
Kazipara, Rokeya Sarani
Mirpur Dhaka

Djuice

Djuice has used a strange mix of Bengali and English. It has brought the Indian Idols and doing concerts in Dhaka and Chittagong. Djuice seems to be associated with

Grameen Phone as well, the bastion of pride in this country. So what is this Djuice Duniya? Is it a sub-culture that is portraying a manipulation of language, use of words that is alien? Is it actually distorting our language by introducing slang words that will be picked up by our

being used in the language of Djuice because that actually happen to be the language of SMS. Words such as Kothin Vabh, Gejano, Pechal were not invented a month back by Djuice. On the contrary, they have been used to communicate to the youth.

Introducing sports

A sport is a kind of activity that we engage in for pleasure and joy. It tests our strength and power. Sports are also part of our social life. When we play as a team, we learn about teamwork, and how to get united as a group. Unfortunately, our cities have very few parks and playgrounds. And children are the worst victims.

So, why don't schools introduce sports as a subject? If sporting activities become part of the school routine, students will enjoy attending schools. Thus we can also raise our standards in sports.

I would request school authorities to think about the matter.

Tahsin Hyder
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PHOTO: AFP

younger generation? What about bringing sensations like Indian Idols and creating a fever?

Djuice is definitely talking to the young at heart, to young adults who are open to new ideas and who consider themselves as global people. They really do not have a problem in writing Bengali as it is

If these words were merely created, there would never have been a buzz; rather these words are a reflection of our popular youth culture. So if the reality is Kothin, and Pechal and Ajaira, that is what it is reflecting. And furthermore, let me add by saying that it is not an affront to our language. These are hardly

TRUE PICTURES?

PHOTO: STAR

These two pictures were published in The Daily Star on May 4, 2005 in its 'Star: Chittagong' page. Do our politicians remain so humble in their political life, or they show such faces only at election times? **R D Qureshhi, Uttara, Dhaka**

St. Martin's Island

St. Martin's Island, which is detached from the mainland of Bangladesh, is one of the largest coral islands in the world, 35km from Teknaf. A few weeks ago I went there to see the beautiful sites of this island. The only communication system between this island and the mainland is shallow engine boat and a launch ferrying people from Teknaf. There are 7,500 people living in this island and among them 95% are fishermen. But it is a matter of great sorrow that they have only one primary school in the whole island. We met a school teacher who said, "Around 25 students attend high school and only 4/5 of them take SSC exams every year." What is surprising is

that though the government is spending huge amounts of money on education the people in this remote island have not been brought within the purview of our education plan.

We met a boy named Afsar, aged 13, who earns his living by driving a van for tourists. There are so many boys and girls of his age on the island who have become child workers. Another problem in the island is family planning. Every family has about 8/9 members. So I request the government and the education ministry to take the necessary steps so that we can see a prosperous Bangladesh without any neglected part like the St. Martin's Island.

Mamunur Rashid
On e-mail