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Why not resolve the political crisis?

The key to resolve all problems of today is now in the hands of the Honourable President. He is now the Head of the State and Head of the Govt at the same time. Keeping in mind the greater interest of the country, for the sake of allowing the economy to move, for not letting the garments industry lose its markets and to avoid people's overall sufferings, Hon. President has to act now. In him now vests all powers of the State and he is the last hope of the people. His own image and honour is also involved in it. If he wills, he can make a place for him in history.

Considering these points I want to make a few very straightforward proposals as follows:

1. Hon President may relinquish the post of the Chief Adviser of his own volition. It can be an instant decision.
2. In view of the last retired Chief Justice's expression of inability, according to the Constitution the Hon President may then appoint the next retired Chief Justice Hon Mahmudul Ameen Chowdhury as the Chief Adviser. I believe no one will have any objection to neither it nor will there be any violation of the Constitution. This can also be an instant decision, only the time to administer oath will be involved.
3. The new Chief Adviser may choose his own council of advisers. My

cess.

6. The newly constituted EC may update the voters' list in two weeks, if the CEC is a competent administrator. Fund required must not pose any problem. The election schedule announced thereafter will not affect the end date of election. As such there will be no constitutional hurdle.

At this critical time of the country and the nation, I will most humbly hope that Hon President will rise to the occasion.

Here I would like to give an introduction of myself. I was Secretary of six Ministries from 1972 to January, 1992 including one tour of duty as Ambassador of Bangladesh to Turkey, Syria and Lebanon. My last assignment in Govt service was Principal Finance Secretary.

After one year of my retirement from Govt service, I was appointed Governor of Bangladesh Bank in December, 1992 and I held that position till November, 1996. Secondly, I am a freedom fighter.

Considering the need for peace, stability, overall development and a peaceful election, Hon President will, I hope, heed to my proposals and forthwith.

Khorshed Alam, *On e-mail*

A country is the base where peaceful situation would prevail and the safety of life of the countrymen be ensured.

The 2007 Economist Intelligence Unit's index of democracy has placed Bangladesh at 75th position, characterising it as flawed on all five criteria but more so on two: functioning of government and political participation. For years, Bangladesh had to endure the wrath of perpetual Andolans and sufferings of poor governance. Now at the end of 16 years of struggling and flawed democracy, we are also facing another Nemesis in the form of intrigues and inexplicable decision making by the authorities. All the major decisions since the dissolution of last Parliament seem to suffer from lack of transparency and unquestionable compliance with the Constitution. Examples include, inter alia, the assumption by the President of the post of Chief Adviser, unclear demarcation of the roles of President and Chief Adviser played by the same person, unilateral decision making by the Chief Adviser without consultation with his Advisers on key personnel and policy matters, lack of clarity and assumption of responsibility for some government orders and circulars, hurried declaration of election schedule without first publishing voters list, and abrupt stay order of the Chief Justice at the last moment on the writ petitions challenging the President's assumption of Chief Adviser's posi-

Khaleda Zia created doubt in the minds of the people about the neutrality of Chief Adviser. It seemed Mr. Iajuddin was playing a cats and mouse game with the 14-party alliance and testing their resilience. If the activities of former caretaker governments are compared with this one, a clear picture would emerge, which is the bipartisan attitude of present President-cum-Chief Adviser. NDI Report once again reinforced the veracity of 14 parties' claim about exaggerated voter list. Is asking for correcting the voter list beyond the scope of the constitution? Why was the Election Commission so reluctant to correct their mistake? There should a free and fair election where all the voters can exercise their opinion. Such election can still be held if the caretaker chief becomes nonpartisan. It seems he is the only predicament but he shouldn't be so for a credible election.

Kamal Tauseef, *Canada*

I wish to refer to the editorial column of Friday, 01 December entitled 'Take back Bangladesh' by Mr. Zafar Sobhan and make some comments.

I could not better agree on many points made in the column. Every well-meaning and non-partisan Bangladesh citizen wants to see nothing less than reconstitution of the EC

gence of a major political alliance.

While the future of Bangladesh and the well-being of her people are at stake, and political parties are not forthcoming in a spirit of compromise, none but people's uprising can rescue Bangladesh as it did in the past. Our history is replete with such instances. 'Take back Bangladesh' platform (maybe called forum) is the timely launch of a campaign to mobilise massive public opinion and realise the goal of a free and fair election. A political platform under the title 'Neues Forum' launched by peace-loving and law-abiding citizens of former GDR turned into a mass movement that caused the downfall of the communist regime and the unification of the two German states. We had seen the people power in Poland and other former East European countries, and we firmly believe the people of Bangladesh, if necessity demands, will again come to the rescue of their motherland.

While we are eagerly waiting to see some concrete activities of the platform 'Take back Bangladesh', provocative and constructive proposals scholarly made by Barrister Rafique-ul Haque in his article entitled 'Doctrine of state necessity' under the 'point counter-point' forum appeared in your esteemed daily on 04 December



An open letter to Khaleda Zia

I have been encouraged to write this letter after reading a similar one written to Sheikh Hasina on 27-11-2006 by one Mr. Zahid Rahman who appears to be a well wisher of AL.

It is unlikely that this type of letters are read by the person(s) really addressed to but may indirectly the subject be brought to their notice by someone close to them. By writing this open letter to Begum Khaleda Zia who is steering the BNP, I want to bring the followings to kind her attention:

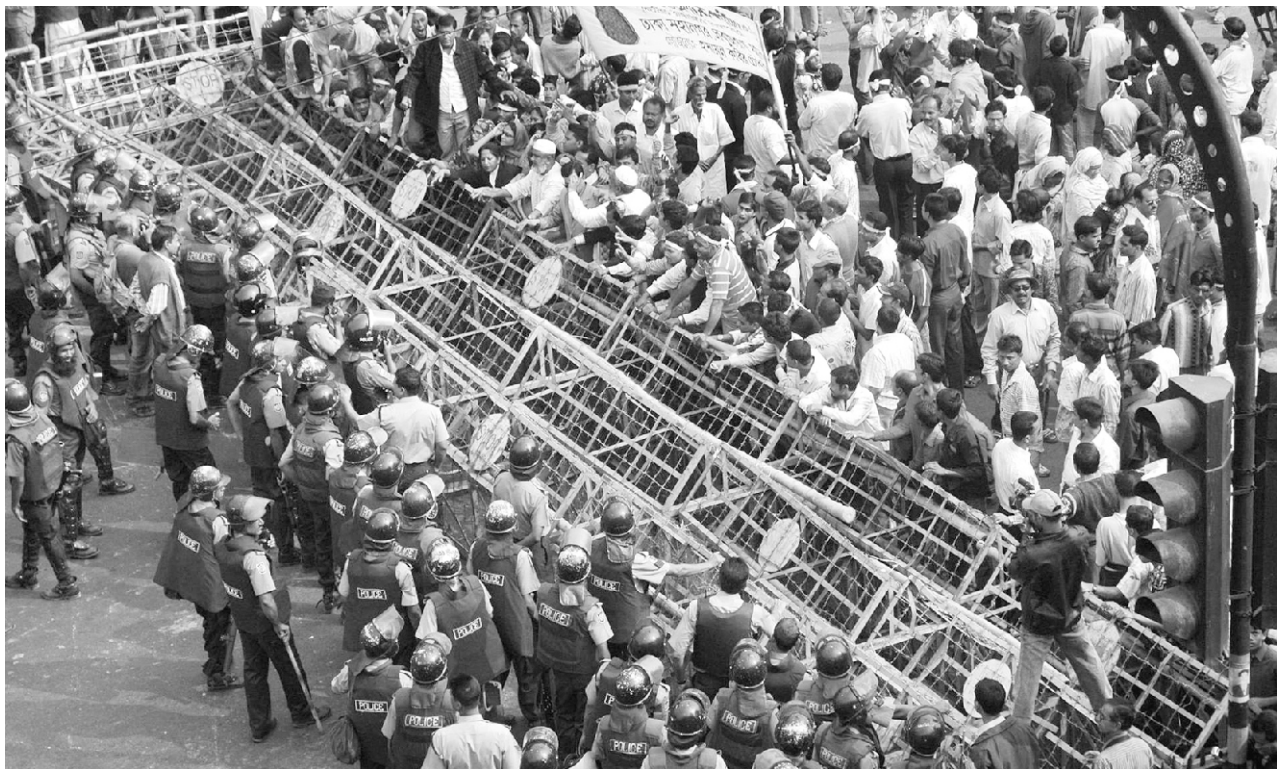
In the last general election BNP came to power with two third majorities because the general people rejected AL for its misrule and not for BNP's popularity. But after coming to power, BNP formed a jumbo cabinet with more than 60 ministers. Who paid the expenses for this largest ever cabinet? Even some ministers were kept in the cabinet for long time without any portfolio. Who is responsible for this wastage of public money of this poor country?

The first president Mr. B. Chawdhury, elected by BNP was forced to resign apparently for his desire to follow a neutral role as the top man of the state. After all he was a founder member of BNP and his neutral role could not go against BNP rather promote the image of the party. Now every one and you can see the result.

Bangladesh was champion in corruption and holding that position for the last few years although last year there was a little improvement because some other states did a bit badly in the field. The BNP-led government did nothing sincerely to arrest corruption rather the name of Tariq Zia is now also alleged, just opposite to that of the late President Ziaur Rahman. Anti Corruption Commission was formed in a way that it cannot work and done only as an eyewash. Any development done is eaten away by corruption that is rampant in all sectors, from education to law enforcing agencies.

You are telling that there is no price increase during BNP rule. No body thinks that you go to kitchen market. But when you seat in the dining table you should ask some one around you how costly the things are. People are at a loss because of price hike of daily essentials. Without refusing the vital truth you can explain the reasons of price hike and accept part of your responsibility. That may help you to some extent.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna



suggestion will be that considering the goodwill, neutrality and the hard work already done by the present team of advisers, he may like to re-appoint them as his advisers.

4. Hon President may request the Election Commission to cancel the election schedule already announced by them.

5. He may send the five Election Commissioners on leave and appoint in their place three absolutely new EC's. One of them may be put on current charge. It will better and welcome if this task is accomplished in consultation with the political parties. However, it will not be desirable to spend more than two days to complete this pro-

But by observing the activities of the political parties of the country it seems that they have turned the country into a theatre where they are acting in the role of only villain whose main intention is to grab absolute state power and dominate over the nation at their will. But they should know that Bangladesh is not a theatre and the people don't like to see them acting in the role of villains. They like to see them doing true politics which will lead the country to the path of development, ensure the safety of life and create peaceful situation.

Kshitish Chandra Milan
Asst. Teacher, Bogra YMCA Public School

tion.

The politicians as well as the judiciary in interpreting and defending the constitution in a transparent and participatory way must practice constitutional democracy. Bangladesh will never be able to build traditions and practices necessary for a strong democracy in accordance with constitution if it struggles and sways between andolans and intriguing and non-transparent state decisions.

Dr. A.T. Rafiqur Rahman
Professor, City University of New York, USA

One on one parley of the Chief Adviser with BNP Chairperson Begum



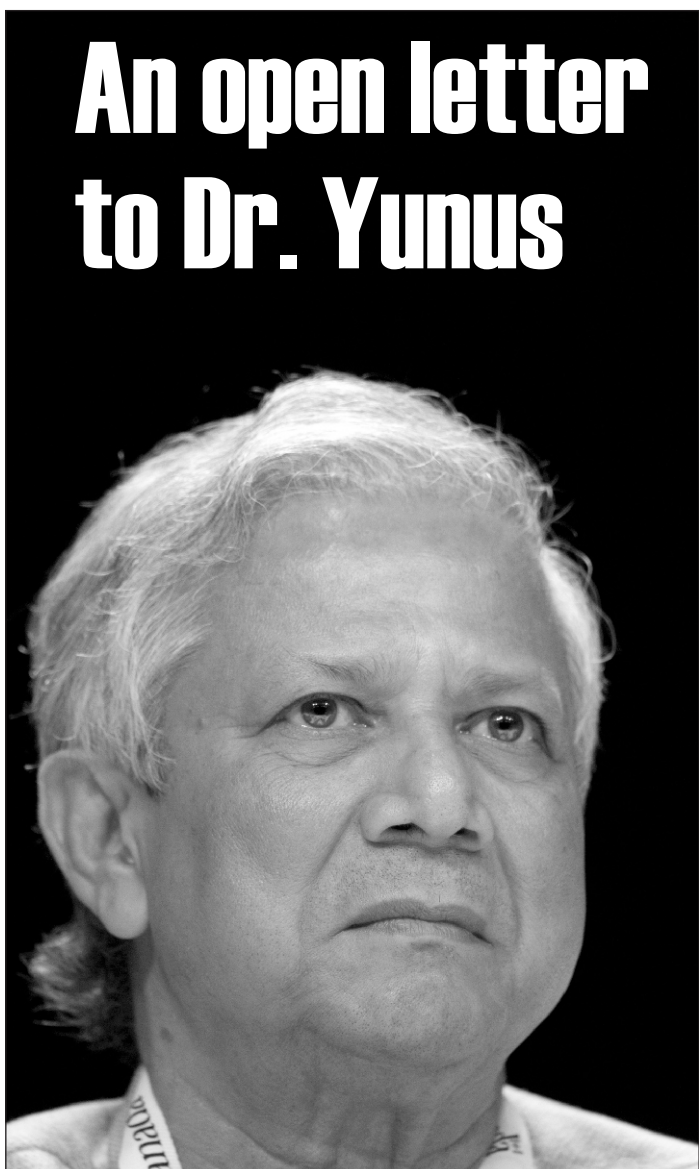
and a credible voter list so as to enable the Caretaker Government to hold national elections in a free and fair manner. Can they be accomplished within the time frame of 90 days? I revert to the point a little later.

I tend to believe the national leaders of major political parties are fully aware that free and fair elections are the lifeblood of a democracy and the latter is the main pillar of good governance. However, they seem to lose sight of the reality and the fact that Bangladesh is now under sharp focus of the international community. We must overcome the present political impasse created owing to the intransi-

caught my attention. The Caretaker Government should heed Barrister Rafique's suggestion and proceed to act upon the procedures outlined therein in the light of 'Doctrine of state necessity'.

I think all forums, political and apolitical platforms and political parties should accept Barrister Rafique's proposals, stop all sorts of political agitations and focus on a free and fair election so that we regain confidence and respect of the international community, vital for our national progress and prosperity.

Ambassador Subir Kumar Bhattacharyya (Retd.)
On e-mail



An open letter to Dr. Yunus

I am very proud of you as a Bangladeshi and as a Chittagonian. I was one of the organisers at the Washington DC reception and it was a great honour for me to meet you in person.

Recently, I saw on TV your peace proposal lecture and I support your intention for peace. However, I am afraid this somehow sided you with one political party. We respectfully beg and urge you to stay above any politics, from being perceived as taking side.

I also think giving Iajuddin A+ was premature. Whatever you say has and will have an impact, sir. I want to see you as a guardian for entire nation. I would caution you about our politicians as a dedicated fan of yours.

I would like to respectfully urge you to make a public statement where you would ask the President to be fair to all parties and be neutral. Mr. President has not done enough to gain our trust. He could have resolved the EC issue had he talked to the parties before appointing yet other two BNP men there.

I think the advisers gained trust from everyone with their apparently good intentions and were only held back by the President. People are very smart nowadays and can sense what is going on. I would like to urge you to also meet Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia. I also would like you to do something so that you don't come across as supporting any particular parties as soon as you can.

Miro Jangi
Maryland, USA

Private universities

A university is supposed to be a place where a student can explore his or her knowledge to understand and appreciate the world in a new light. In the 1990s, there has been a growth of private universities in Bangladesh. This has been, to some extent, good for our country because it allows more students to get an undergraduate degree and enter the workforce as 'efficient' workers. Our creaking public education system has not been growing fast enough to accommodate all the students intending to obtain an undergraduate or post-graduate degree. For some, private universities are a blessing -- a ticket to find employment at a multinational company or at a reputable commercial bank. However, many of our private universities are not operating as the 'center of learning,' rather, are operating as 'trade schools.' Why do I make this allegation? Well, let's look at the facts.

A casual observation of the programmes offered by these universities show that two departments are omnipresent in all the universities -- business administration and computer science/engineering. Other programmes offered by some of the universities include architecture, law, physics (only at BRAC University), environmental studies, English, economics, pharmacy and medicine. Why do the universities offer only these programmes? Is it because they are driven by market demand and supply mechanism and offer

only courses that they deem would be marketable? If not then why programmes like chemistry, biology, philosophy, history, sociology, journalism, psychology, arts, political science, literature and BANGLA are not offered by any institution? Any such university does not offer even civil engineering, mechanical engineering courses. Also, none of the private universities offers any bachelor's degree in any other foreign language like French, Spanish, Chinese or Japanese.

Why do we need all those other courses? Are professionals in those fields really needed in the workforce? Can Bangladesh, a poor country, find any use for such fields of study? Of course she does. Our country is growing at over five percent per annum, and there is industrialisation taking place around the country. Bangladesh needs people who are fluent in languages other than English so that businesses can communicate effectively with people from different nations. Our country also needs engineers and scientists to invent homegrown, marketable products for the benefit of the consumers. Managers need social scientists like industrial psychologists to understand the needs and grievances of workers. Psychologists and sociologists can help prevent worker tensions by alerting managers of their grievances and to build a strong corporate culture. A lack of psychologists in the industry is probably the reason why we

have been witnessing such turmoil in the garments sector of Bangladesh.

Our country needs thinkers and artists to make our nation more creative. If creativity is stifled, then, are we any different than the robots? We need creative people to improve the image of Bangladesh. Courses like arts, journalism, literature and philosophy can help to produce world-renowned artists and writers, and maybe, the next Pulitzer Prize winner can be a Bangladeshi. Such creative people can bring fame to the country and make us proud.

Our private universities are doing a great service for our nation by educating a good number of students. But, they should now work to introduce new programmes that can make us more creative and more competitive in the world.

T. M. Tonmoy Islam
Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Attorney General

It's the norm in every democratic society that the Attorney General resigns with the change of the government. We saw it in our country also. But this

Attorney General Mr. Mohammad Ali appointed by BNP government did not follow the democratic norms. The observation made by the people and political parties as well that this Caretaker Government is actually the shadow government of BNP becomes valid with the BNP Attorney General still in position. This is horrible for

democracy when we see former BNP lawmaker and standing committee member Khondker Mahbubuddin acts as a lawyer of Election Commission in the recent writ against the announcement of election schedule. I don't know why the honorable Advisers and the news dailies and other conscious people are yet to raise this issue.

To be very frank, BNP has demolished all the constitutional institutes of the country. It may take hundreds of years to get things correct. I call upon all the conscious people to stand against the misrule, irregularities committed by whosoever. I request the political parties, journalists, conscious people to pressurise the Caretaker Government to change the BNP appointed Attorney General and other lawmakers representing state.

Dr. MM Mortayez Amin
Consultant Embryologist IVF Centre, Labaid Specialized Hospital Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Beyond contempt!

Barrister Sara Hossain's "Beyond Contempt" is just the latest evidence of the peculiar fashion of reasoning that has gripped a section of the country's leaders, journalists, and it seems now, lawyers. According to this logic, when innocent people are beaten to death on the street, it is not the people who physically beat them to death who are responsible, but some other person, who bears the blame.

The hapless political activist who died in the first days of the caretaker government was not actually killed by his murderers, but a retired chief justice, who did not act fast enough to abdicate the duty he should have, by all rights, taken upon himself. Similarly, it was the (now holidaying) Chief Election Commissioner, who was responsible for all the misery caused to the whole of the country, and not the people who actually blocked the streets, caused the blockade, prevented students from going to schools, and undid so much economic progress.

The latest example of this pathetic line of reasoning was the horrendous events which recently sullied the halls of our highest courts. Once again, it was the Chief Justice and the Attorney General themselves, you see, who were really responsible for the carnage and the horrible ransacking of their own offices. Please disregard all the evidence you see of howling young men sacking offices and setting fire to cars, supposedly let loose by the people who can lay claim to being the best lawyers in Bangladesh. Oh yes, all that destruction was really caused because of the CJ and the AG. You see, that's how the penal code of a particular group of people works.

I agree with Barrister Hussein, there are some people in our country who are beyond contempt.

Ehteshamul Haque
On e-mail