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The unfair 'oborodh'



The photograph of the tired girl waiting at Zia International Airport for a ride home (The Daily Star, November 14) drives home the price people are paying for the madness of a few.

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 trade and commerce and rights of freedom hostage, burns buses and uproots railroad tracks and then claims that it is being done to protect our democratic rights has to be condemned.

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 actions.

Shomit Chowdhury, On e-mail

Going by the constitution?

BNP and AL leaders are telling again and again that everything should be done according to the constitution. I agree with them but I have some questions as well. May I ask the leaders of the two parties: does our constitution allow corruption? I hope you have not forgotten that you have made this country world champion in corruption. Disparity between rich and poor are widening day by day which is also against the constitution. Practically, there is no accountability of the top political leaders. They can produce godfathers, build houses in Malaysia or in other foreign countries with the money of the people; it is there choice whether anybody can bring his or her dying mother to a hospital in Dhaka and they can easily hire very efficient lawyers to protect themselves.

It is the constitution which they violate frequently.

Dr. Mahboob Hossain

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Nolok Babu

I voted for Nolok Babu in last year's Closeup 1 contest on TV, for I truly liked his performance. He would be one of the gems of our society that's what I expected. However, I was dismayed at the fact that the same Nolok Babu and his friends beat up a man after hitting him with his car. This was not expected of him. We expected him to be more mature. However, Babu has already said sorry to the court. This incident should be an eye-opener for those who are celebrities and public figures.

We commoners may commit such offences, but they cannot. No, they absolutely cannot.

Ekram Kabir

Gulshan, Dhaka

Our garment products in UK

In July last, I was preparing myself for my PhD viva examinations. My English supervisor told me to buy all new dresses for that event. I went to the renowned and expensive British departmental shop "Debenhams" in Nottingham. I purchased a new suit, one shirt with a tie and a pair of shoes. When I came to house I found that the shirt was made in Bangladesh. The price of that shirt was 15 pounds (around TK.2100). I was so happy that I could not explain it; other items were made in EU. I successfully defended my viva examinations wearing that Bangladeshi shirt with English suit. In the UK, I did not find any good Bangladeshi products except shirts. I found English people like Bangladeshi shirts very much though the price is not so cheap compared to Chinese shirts (in some cases just one pound!).

During that period our poor garment workers were agitating violently in different parts of Bangladesh. Probably they have lots of grievances. I think the price of one shirt is equal to a monthly salary of a deprived worker. I came to know from newspapers that certain quarters were trying to destroy our garment markets. If this is true, then we all should be very careful. On the other hand, our owners may do a little bit more for the deprived and very poor workers. Thanks to our industrious owners of garment factories and government officials who created this opportunity.

Now the caretaker government and also our politicians may take some initiative to save our garment industry.

Dr. Ruhul Khan

Savar, Dhaka

A difficult situation

Although I am unable to support any of the political parties of our country due to their failure to think about the nation rather than their personal gains, I feel compelled to write this letter. Not because I feel that either one of our major political parties is right or better, but because I am having my most fundamental rights as a citizen of a democratic nation snatched away from me.

Having a partisan caretaker government and a partisan Election Commission takes away any possibility of a free and fair election. Even if the Awami League is resorting to mob justice, a form of justice, which can only be titled as revenge, I feel that it is impossible for them to come to a solution with the caretaker government and the Election Commission that are in place now.

Unfortunately, we Bangladeshis do not have the choice of electing a party, which will give us good governance. But what we must have the right for is choosing even between a rock and a hard place. If an election is not free and fair, it takes away that choice from us. If votes can be rigged, then the essential characteristic of a democracy, one man one vote, has been taken away from me.

It is, therefore, my opinion that no political party should participate in an election if it takes place under these partisan circumstances. I have heard many people who talk of freedom, rights and the good of the nation, saying that the Awami League should assent and come to a compromise. What they fail to understand is that there is no place for compromise. We may lose economic growth every day, we may be restrained in our homes every day, we may even have to watch people being beaten to death on television every day. And even though this should stop, participation in elections, unless the requisite conditions are created, will be the greatest failure of any political party, which cares about the nation. My right to have my vote count is the most essential right I have as a citizen of a democratic country. And to give in now, to compromise that right so as to have peace and economic growth along with a biased election, is not an option. It is better to shed blood to protect our right to choose who will govern us, than to

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Molla Mohammad Shaheen

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have the right of choosing who will govern us taken away from us.

Adeeba Aziz Khan
Barrister-at Law
Dhaka

Pitfalls of CTG

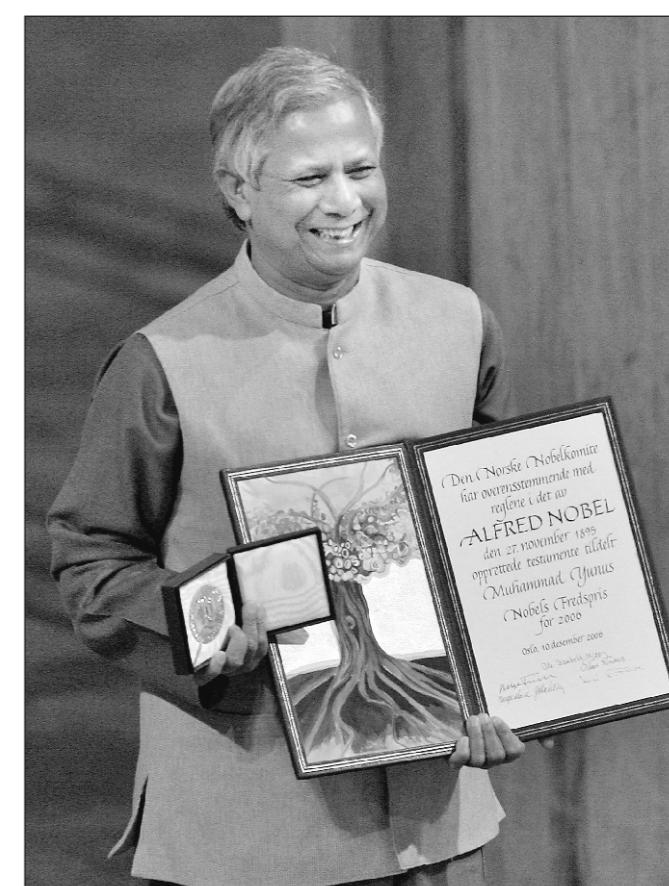
Many politicians try to prove that the Caretaker Government system is an innovative political idea. But to me, the system seems to be a great setback to democracy in our country. This concept has come from political faithlessness. The system was introduced in 1996 through the 13th Amendment to our Constitution by then BNP government to survive the wrath of the mass people. People desired to practice authentic democracy after the ouster of the despotic regime of President Ershad. But unfortunately BNP shattered the dreams of the people through Magura by-election. Then main opposition party the Awami League could not trust the BNP and to ensure a free, fair and acceptable national election the AL waged a movement for caretaker government system. Though at first the BNP shrugged off the demand, ultimately it had to capitulate to public upsurge in 1996. Within only ten years the caretaker government system has polarised our political groups, politicised administration and aggravated political mistrust and vendetta. This system has not smoothed the path of democracy; rather it has massacred our political culture. All the political parties want to come to power by hook or by crook. Political acrimony has criminalised our society. Muscle power and black money play a pivotal role in national election. To ensure free, fair and flawless election, the Election Commission should be rejuvenated and rectified massively. It should be separated from the PMO. Voter ID card with photo and electronic voting machine should be introduced to prevent vote rigging. For this we can seek help from our neighboring country India. Many donor agencies are ready to help us, if we need funds for this. Special electoral laws should be enacted to bar recently retired bureaucrats and business tycoons from contesting in the national election.

The main political parties should sit together to nullify the system and reform the Election Commission, if they want to perpetuate democracy in our country. I hope the politicians will ponder over this matter.

Yunus' formula

Nobel laureate Dr. Muhammad Yunus advocated a 'coalition government' formula in his speech delivered at a civic reception at the Sangsab Bhaban premises organised by the Dhaka City Corporation. In his speech he suggested a concept of coalition government where the two biggest rival parties in Bangladesh would form government by mutual understanding and compromise. The proposal is obviously good but not a practical one in anyway. Actually, immediately after I had heard the proposal I did not have to think twice before forming my personal opinion about the inefficacy of his suggestions (I beg his pardon if I am too critical about this). Actually, the idea of a coalition government is not new in our country and people in this country are quite familiar with this concept, because our country has been practically divided into two alliances (broadly marking secularists and non-secularists). So, I have nothing to say against the concept of 'coalition govt'. But what seems to me quite absurd in the proposal of Dr Yunus is his invitation to the two arch rivals, AL and BNP, to mingle and form a 'consensus govt'. It is worth mentioning that the main leaders of the two parties do not even talk to each other. (They do not want to see each other's face). Professor Yunus himself could perceive the superficiality of his formula as he latter told in his speech in the Press Club that his formula could be a utopia indeed.

Md Arif Sadeq
University of Dhaka



Security providers

We have recently seen a rise in the number of security companies and those who are running these companies say they are in the field to complement and supplement the government's law enforcing mechanism. This certainly is a good initiative both in terms of new business as well as ensuring the security of the people. This, however, also proves that the government's law enforcing authorities cannot ensure the security of the people. Doesn't it also mean that the government machinery would fail to identify any breach of law or crime committed by these security companies? Certainly, because no one would at all suspect these companies. They work in a field full of criminals and, therefore, getting allured to that world is not unlikely. It's worthwhile to mention that a few dreadful robberies in Dhaka city were allegedly committed with the complicity of the personnel belonging to these security companies.

Therefore, the questions are: does anyone oversee the operations of these companies? Does anyone keep any track of their operations whether they themselves are getting involved in any crime? What do people do if they discover these companies committing crimes?

We wonder what happened to the regulation that the government was formulating for administering and controlling the security companies. In doing so, the government should better remember whether our society really needs these security companies.

Ekram Kabir

Gulshan, Dhaka

Why this trouble?



The whole nation is experiencing a lot of trouble under the non-party caretaker government. Troubles started long before handing over of the state power to caretaker government by the BNP-led alliance under Justice KM Hasan who, according to constitution, ought to be the chief adviser of the caretaker government. The then ruling BNP wanted to see him in that position but the AL-led 14-party combine stood against him raising their voice about his impartiality. Standing against each

other the two major political parties of the country- BNP and Awami League-- created a lot of trouble which caused the general people to suffer immensely. Finally, when the protest against his holding the office of chief adviser of caretaker government got intense, Justice KM Hasan agreed not to hold the office of CA. Afterwards, CEC Justice MA Aziz also had to go on a three-month leave facing the protest from not only a few numbers of political parties but also the majority of people.

But the problems that we are facing as a nation have not been solved.

Kshitish Chandra Milan
Asst. Teacher, Bogra YMCA Public School, Bogra

The biggest favour that the two major parties can do to the nation is that they can refrain from taking part in the next elections. This could well be their first and last opportunity to offer something to the nation. Otherwise, the frustrated population will reject them for good.

The Anti Corruption Commission can start functioning, the judiciary can become independent, law enforcing bodies should become corruption free, businesses can run less unethically.

Let us organise a movement asking them to excuse the nation at least for the next five years.

Nasim Chowdhury

Essex, UK

We all know that basically politicians, as policy makers, are supposed to concentrate on the magnitude of the current national problems and issues of common public interest, foresee the need of the future and formulate short-term and

long-term policies to cater to the needs of the present and future for the welfare of the people. In real life, our politicians are not involved in fulfillment of their constitutional obligations, election pledges etc.

Serious inconsistency we notice

if we analyze the demand of our political parties and their activities. It happens all the way that the party in opposition puts tremendous pressure on the party in power; whereas, after having the power in hand that party, in most cases, does not go by

their commitments.

The situation must change. Now, the most crucial question is "where to start?"

Shams Chowdhury
One-mail

