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Place the country above politics



The four-party alliance and the grand alliance are not working for the welfare of the people of Bangladesh, rather they are more interested in grabbing power for the next five years so that they can rob Bangladesh like free for all.

The BNP has done enough misrule in the last five years and all of these BNP leaders are now very rich. The money they have looted from the people of Bangladesh is just too much and unprecedented in any civilised society. So it is not surprising to see Bangladesh as the most corrupt nation in the world. The sad part is nobody in

Bangladesh cares for this disgrace seal from the world body.

Start a movement to bring the honest people to form a government for the people, by the people and of the people. We have seen enough suffering and it is now time to wake up and stand against these corrupt politicians. This is your chance.

Tell these politicians that enough is enough because Bangladesh belongs to all of us and not only to these corrupt politicians. We have many educated people and scholars who can really work for the country and make Bangladesh a real Golden

Bangladesh.

Sufi

USA

At long last a ray of light has flashed with the postponement of elections in Bangladesh, reeling under the state of emergency, scheduled for 22 January. In deciding to step down as the caretaker government chief and postponing the elections planned for later this month, President Iajuddin Ahmed had no other option. Unlike the US neo-conservatives the rulers in Dhaka cannot afford to risk

being stubborn when the country's economy is in very bad shape and the opposition has managed to get international support for its movement. Moreover, the final nail was the decision by the UN and the EU to pull out their election observers, though they refuse to do the same in Somalia where the US forces are engaged in genocide and destruction. Postponement of elections, however, is the beginning of the course of action to resolve the crisis. There has to be concern as to whether the Awami League and the BNP will respect the state of emergency. The former, having tasted success, may try to press home the success it won in forcing the postponement and the interim government's resignation. The latter could be defensive. Since the chief concern of the politicians surrounds their own advancements rather than of the people, egoism may dictate the future actions of the government and opposition. Both will feel constrained by the limitations of the state of emergency, which has curtailed freedom of movement and speech, including the right to criticise the government. It is a knife-edge situation. If one party decides to take matters into its own hands, the other will do the same. One does not know if Dr Yunus, the recipient of this year's Nobel Peace Prize and has the potential for creative action could come forward to help resolve the crisis.

Dr. Abdul Ruff

JNU, New Delhi

President Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed has declared the state of emergency. We have no comment on whether it is good or bad. Let's wait and see. But we are eager to know what is actually happening. We need to know!

But we cannot because we are getting news from no source. Only state-run BTV is the source now, and we all know the extent of the reliability of this source. People are in a suffocating situation as they have no way to know what is happening and it is

creating doubt and fear in their minds.

We hope that the authorities concerned will soon realise our predicament.

Md. Firoj Alam

West Dhanmondi, Dhaka

The political impasse can be resolved only through negotiation between the two major parties. It's our national problem. TV channels on December 2 and newspapers on December 3 broadcast and published the NDI report which said there are 1.22 crore fake names in the voter list. This has created a great controversy.

Please remember we are passing through a crisis. The major political parties should bear the responsibility of resolving it. We want a peaceful life. Our request to the AL and the BNP: please don't practice politics in the present form, try to reach some sort of understanding on important national matters.

Dr. Waliul Islam

Uttara, Dhaka

As a citizen of Bangladesh, I feel that President Iajuddin Ahmed and the new caretaker government should first go for drastic action against corrupt officials and godfathers and take account of all the financial bungling that has taken place in the last few years. I am sure the common citizens of Bangladesh will not mind even if it takes one year to clean the house of major corruption and then hold the general election in January 2008. If necessary a national referendum should be held to legalise the stay of the caretaker government for a year.

As for voters' ID card, let the Election Commission and its field staff deliver application forms at our residence and collect the same after a week along with two stamp size photographs of applicants for making ID card and keeping an official record. Upon receiving the duly filled-in application form and proper verification, the representative of the Election Commission can issue the ID card with a serial number

on the spot. We will get the ID card laminated at our cost.

The government need not spend much money on this project. Let the much talked about voter's ID card have a humble beginning.

Ziauddin Ahmed

One e-mail

Stubborn politicians are to be blamed for the emergency, I got calls from my friends who run medium size business that it was inevitable and they were praying for this. The financial loss the country has sustained in the past months will take years to recover. My nephew's exam started a month ago and couldn't see a successful ending, I have got a much stressed SMS today. These are only two examples.

Unilateral withdrawal of UN or EU observers is not the solution, the solution was to force all the political parties (since they do not understand what dialogue means or they do not want to show respect to dialogue) to change their attitude and salvage the constitution and democracy.

Tazim

Manama, Bahrain

It is very unfortunate to witness the turn of events right now in Bangladesh. While such a precarious situation might call for drastic measures such as the declared emergency, it was unwise of the government to ask the media not to publish any news 'against the government'. This is again another extremely unfortunate event-as it is quintessential for the nation in this crisis to be aware of the changing scenarios and be able to freely express their opinions. You are right in saying we take pride in our free press - simply so because the Fourth Estate is one of the very few institutions left in Bangladesh, practicing and promoting democracy. The imposition on the media is not the way forward.

Safwan B Shabab

Colgate University, United States

Death of a sacred ideal

The AL has put coffin on the greatest ideal for which Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman struggled all his life. The ideal for which all educated, progressive and democratic minded people of Bangladesh stand for and have earned some respect among the Western democratic countries. This moderate stand on religious tolerance is perhaps one of the exclusive prides for Bangladesh among the predominantly Muslim countries.

Bangabandhu, one of the greatest sons of Bengal, must be wondering from heaven what is happening to his dream of building Sonar Bangla, based on human dignity, democracy and secularism. We admired him, trusted and respected him for two very worthy reasons. First, he gave us a country of our own after thousand years to be developed and governed by people of the soil. Second, a country, which was created, based on secular principles.

Many of us are completely shattered, devastated with the news of

the agreement signed with some fundamentalist groups by the Awami League. I am no blind supporter of the Awami League. Only

League or Party I care about is the individuals who truly care for Bengali culture, Bengali heritage, Bengali literature... its soil, its rivers and people. I just find it impossible to believe Bangabandhu's own party can get into such an ugly act to destroy the basic principle of Bangladesh and Bangabandhu. It will suffice to say with this act the Awami League has destroyed not only its image and prospect in the forthcoming election but also the hope and aspiration of many generations to come. The only winners are the fundamentalists.

Once a wise Englishman told me in 1974 while traveling together to Mymensingh, "You guys always blame poor Mujib for all your misfortune, but how many guys in his cabinet will advise him to do the right things which will benefit the country only and not serve their personal interests." The statement is still valid after 31 years of his death; Top leaders are still surrounded by the same sycophants

and ill motivated selfish people devoid of any noble purpose or ideal.

Ronald Reagan used to take far too many short vacations to his presidential retreat. Once newsmen asked him, "How can you afford to go on vacation so frequently when you are the Chief Executive of the most powerful country?" He responded, "I have surrounded myself with the best talents I can find in America in various fields, I give them freedom and responsibility to deliver results and I relax." Do the best talents available in Bangladesh surround our prime leaders in political, industrial and commercial world?

Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharjee did so much hard work in the recent months and suffered so much hardship and challenges to create public awareness about all the great principles of democracy, good governance and human values; now all are in drain for one single act of the Awami League. The biggest question in voters' minds will be: "Can we trust a party which can so easily abandon its fundamental principle for which it stood for over

50 years?" This land has produced three Nobel laureates out of the total seven in the whole sub-continent. I am hopeful individually many more Bengalees will earn global respect for their contribution to mankind, regardless of how badly the politicians lead us to misery and suffering.

Munim Chowdhury

Founding Member, Tagore Society of New York

Ershad factor

Former President H.M. Ershad was deposed 17 years ago. Several cases were filed against him. Some were resolved and he endured jail sentences. Others were used by ruling political groups for securing his support for their partisan interests, violating due process of law and delaying justice to serve political interests of the government in power.

The verdict on the current Japanese boat case was delivered in 1995 and Ershad appealed against the verdict. Apparently, as reported in the press, no action was taken until the case was resurrected

from the archives after over 10 years in last months of 2006 when Ershad decided to join the opposition.

Dr. A.T. Rafiqur Rahman

Professor, City University of New York, USA

President Ershad has suffered a lot for 16 years as the successive governments used the cases against him as political tools to serve their political purposes. Due process of law requires cases to be dispensed timely and not to be abused as political weapon by the government against the opposition political leaders and workers as has been done merrily in our political system. By doing so our elected rulers have lowered the respect, dignity and integrity of our judicial system. Ershad deserves consideration of Presidential pardon. We submit to the President to consider, in pursuance of his power under Article 49 to grant pardons, reprieves and respite and to remit, suspend or commute any sentence passed by any court, tribunal or other authority to issue order as appropriate to allow Ershad to participate in the election. Both the cause of justice and that of democracy will be well served by such positive consideration.

Election-a suggestion

Today (10. 1.07) I was reading the newspaper with a heavy heart. We live so far away from our family and relatives that every time something is happening in our country, it makes us worried and sad. It seems there is no hope for us. At the end of Ershad time, I just started attending classes in Dhaka University. We saw the demonstrations and sometimes took part in it. There was a hope that if the autocratic government goes, then we would get a government that would work for the country. We didn't lose our hope in 1996 and 2001. We thought it's a new democracy so there would be problems but we would learn. Now it's 2007 and see where we are standing. We destroyed the caretaker government system totally and I would put the blame on both the BNP and the AL. Both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina are responsible for the misery of the people. As we don't have any future for a third party and

as we don't see one single politician who acts, talks and guides like a statesman, I feel very depressed.

Some of us think if we have an election participated by all, then we will be out of this problem. That's not going to happen. No matter what happens in the election, I don't think either Khaleda Zia or Sheikh Hasina has any concern for us. We are tools for them to go to power and flex their muscles when they are there. The AL tried its best to put its own people in all important posts before it left power in 2001 and the BNP even went one step ahead in 2006. Starting from the first, second or third level leaders, I don't see anyone in either party who has the guts to stand up. I thought for a few days that Bikalpa Dhara (later LDP) will be something different but if you look closely at their activities you will see they have the same blood that runs through the BNP and the AL.

We know who they are. We the people know it for the last 15 years but we still vote for them. We provide all the power they got. No matter how corrupt and bad they are when we go to the polls we look for the symbols. We start thinking that Bangabandhu did that or Zia did that so we have to vote for either one of them. We don't care about the actual candidate even if he is a murderer. So no matter how much we want to blame the politicians, actually we the people are also responsible for the crisis.

I have a simple suggestion. Can we randomly distribute the symbols and take away the provision of one party getting one specific symbol? How about if each constituency randomly distributes its symbols? Then we the people will have to think before we vote. We will have to know a candidate before we recognise him by a symbol. Also, it will be difficult for the political parties to do ballot stuffing. It will be a bit more costly to implement but I think we have a better chance of nominating better candidates. It's time we the people took some responsibility for the actions of our leaders.

Saif

One e-mail

IRAQ NEEDS ITS OWN GANDHI

US president George W. Bush twice fooled the American people: once by going to war on the pretext to dismantle Iraq's non-existent weapons of mass destruction and Saddam's unproven links with al-Qaeda and secondly, by declaring mission accomplished after the fall of Baghdad. Now he is again trying to fool the American people by asserting that sending more troops will ensure the American victory.

After more than 3,000 American and countless Iraqi casualties, the American people are unlikely to believe Mr. Bush again. They know that instead of bringing democracy, the US occupation of Iraq has only widened the Shia-Sunni sectarian divide, and by allowing Al Maliki government to hang Saddam Hussein after a largely show trial, the Bush administration has lost the trust of Iraq's once-dominant Sunni minority.

Now a game of deception seems to be going on. Iraq's Shiite Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki is trying to fool Mr. Bush into believing that he can protect the Sunnis by reining in the Shiite militias who are, in fact, his major backers. President Bush is trying to fool the

American people into believing that with additional US troops, Mr. Maliki will be able to stop the Shiite militias from killing the Sunnis. The most likely outcome of the arrival of 20,000 more US troops will be more American and Iraqi casualties.

In this seemingly endless sectarian bloodletting in Iraq, it may be interesting to take a look how Mahatma Gandhi brought an end to Hindu-Muslim bloodletting before India's independence from Britain in 1947. The issue was partition of India into two states on the basis of religion -- India and Pakistan. The Hindus were adamantly opposed to the partition of what they called "Mother India" and the Muslims were equally determined to achieve Pakistan. The result was a communal bloodbath in which thousands perished. The British had a large Indian army at its disposal, but it was deeply divided on Hindu, Muslim and Sikh religious lines. As such, the British were (correctly) wary to use these troops to stop the communal violence.

Mahatma Gandhi, who led India in the non-violent struggle for independence, stopped the Hindu-Muslim bloodbath by reluctantly agreeing to the parti-

tion and by going on a hunger strike to death unless the killings stopped. This had an electrifying effect on both Hindus and Muslims and the killings stopped.

Although Gandhi was later assassinated by a Hindu extremist who thought he was too partial to the Muslims, he had shown the world how to face even extreme violence non-violently. In this bloody sectarian conflict, Iraq doesn't need more American troops, but its own Gandhi who can reach out across the sectarian divide and bring real peace. Can Mr. Bush or Mr. Maliki go on a hunger strike to end the Shia-Sunni bloodletting? The world is waiting.

Mahmood Elahi

Iris Street, Ottawa, Canada

The US did it again! They ruthlessly bombed another sovereign country: Somalia. It was predicted that today or tomorrow the US & its allies, especially Israel, would attack every Muslim nation one by one. In the American air strike in Somalia, which some say killed as many as 10 suspected terrorists, innocent civilians were the victims. It marked a new, open military foray by the United

