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Parleys on general election

We are extremely shocked and alarmed at the decision of the CG to invite the two large "political alliances" for dialogue in finding a solution to the current political problems. It was these political elements who were solely responsible for all kinds of disorders in the country. So how one can go to the same elements again for solutions of the problems created by them ? The idea is ridiculous and totally illogical. These political alliances were formed to grab power and share the booties by plundering national wealth. It was in the newspapers recently that nominations were sold like any commodity against cash without considering if the candidate was an honest and competent person to become a lawmaker. To secure support of a former dictator, the two women leaders came out with open bids.

After all, what are you going to achieve by talking to these politicians to whom only self and party interests matter? So going back to them once again will not yield any result as noticed in the series of parleys with them by the previous advisers. Their intransigence led to the present state of affairs in the country. Moreover, discussions with these politicians may further complicate the process and will encourage them to unnecessarily meddle in the activities of the CG. Therefore, going back to them will be going back to square one. The nation more or less is aware what should be done for holding a free and fair election under a neutral administration. Let us now proceed steadily to achieve that goal within a reasonable time frame, and if necessary a referendum could be called for endorsement of the measures adopted by the CG in the best interest of the country. Alternatively, by issuing a public questionnaire through various media, the public opinion on the issues also can be assessed. It is after all the people of the country who matter and not the troublemakers and selfish politicians who have brought the country to the brink of disaster.

Mohammad Ataul Hoque, On e-mail

DU shutdown
Dhaka University has opened after a long 'shutdown' enforced by the AL-led Progressive Students Alliance (PSA). The university shouldn't be made a place for party politics at the cost of all academic activities. The AL and BNP backed student fronts have to address the issue.

MAH Nazim
University of Dhaka

The Japanese way
As a citizen with the background as one of the very elderly businessmen in international business and that mostly with the Japanese, I came across the most polite Japanese people who are very tolerant too.

They have developed enormously the working system under a Private Path to Prosperity and have already denationalised the entire system of export-import and facilities of service industries in the private sector.

Examples are many but for brevity's sake, I cite one below about the manufacturing of Toyota Car in Toyota City.

The original company places orders to about 500 makers of most other spare parts than the main engine. The 500 small and medium sized industrial entrepreneurs make it not for Toyota alone but have developed their expertise to make other vehicles-- Honda, Mazda, Nissan etc.

So, we cannot say Toyota car makers are the only exporters, the spare parts makers are also

exporters.

I have noted that in the event of any individual being rejected or coming under public criticism, he or she tenders resignation forthwith.

We have a lot to learn from them.

Md. Bazlur Rahman
A former Member of Election Commission of the Premier Chamber of Bangladesh (DCCI)

Set things right
Now that the new caretaker government has taken control, the civil society and all concerned seem to be eager to see an election staged immediately to hand over power to the elected government. I propose a break instead in order to provide some time to the nation for healing the wound. There is a lot to be settled before an election can take place. The CG must take as much time it needs to publish a correct voter list and issue the multipurpose ID card. There is no need for a rush in doing so. The nation will be happy to allow whatever time is needed.

It's pretty clear to us that only a free and fair election is not what we want. We want honest, visionary and able leaders to be elected in order to face challenges. Can we be satisfied with the same old wine in a new bottle? Don't we deserve seeing some fresh-blood contesting in elections instead of corrupt, unimaginative money-mongers who are nominated by political parties year after year? Yes, we do. The CG while correcting the voter list and promulgating ID cards can

advise the President or the Election Commission to issue a decree so that:

a) All criteria for recruitment of BCS officers are applied to those seeking nominations in parliamentary elections. MPs form the executive body so they must possess better intellectual capabilities than bureaucrats. Ability of leading a mob 'can not' be the only quality for leading a nation. If a convicted individual is not eligible for government service, then how can he/she be eligible to sit in the Parliament? Educational qualifications may be relaxed for a limited period as it will be unrealistic to disqualify undergraduate leaders at this moment.

b) No one should be allowed to submit nomination papers for more than two terms. This will encourage new leadership in our political system.

c) Candidates losing in one term should be barred from contesting again. This will discourage use of money in elections and will leave room for new leadership as well.

If the CG implements these three suggestions nothing will be able to stop us from becoming a dignified and prosperous nation. As politicians will never support any of the above, the CG should sort out the way if it wants to do a real favour to us.

Choosing one from many devils is not for what I will walk down to the polling centre, be it under Dr. Iajuddin or Dr. Fakhruddin.

Khalid, Dhaka

US strategy

By now there is hardly any doubt that the US expects a formidable challenge from any power that emerges strong in any region. Any country considered as a challenger to the US hegemony is treated by the US with an iron hand or, if the enemy power is unshakable, like Russia or China, it tries to accommodate its interests as well, though with a pinch of salt. Protecting, promoting and advancing the US national interests, therefore, has to be part of the national interest of every country in today's globalised world. Once the Soviet Union was considered to be a serious threat, then China and India, and recently Saddam Hussein's Iraq and now Iran is seen as a threat to US hegemony in the region. Taking full control of all possible resources, including energy, by all means thus remains the long-term goal

of US diplomacy. For this reason, its chief foreign policy objective has been to deal sternly with its perceived "enemies". Any leader who opposes or creates huddles in the process of realisation of US ambitions would be severely dealt with, if not eliminated physically. Saddam Hussein, who boldly defended the resources of Iraq, therefore, is no more now, but his martyrdom should help the world, particularly the West Asia, to come to terms with unipolar reality and comprehend the hidden goals of the US which moves very cautiously according to its long term plan. Apart from harnessing support of the Arab nations against Iran, threat of war and real destructive wars causing terrible devastation in target countries are also used increasingly by the US government as a diplomatic strategy to achieve its

goals. This makes pretty clear the hidden agenda behind the US love for the spread of democracy and regime change in West Asia. Following the tragic assassination of Saddam, the US has targeted the Iranian populace in Iraq, shored up warships in the Gulf, got the sanctions slapped on Iran

and is preparing for the invasion of Iran directly or through Israel. After Iraq, US consider Iran to be the potential threat to the cause of US advancing its national interest in the Middle East. Iran's declaration that its nuclear technology would be shared with its neighbours should be taken as a posi-

A tribute to Saddam Hussein

I mourn the death of Saddam Hussein, the only and only undisputed leader of Arab Muslim World.

I find no language to express my hatred towards those who are responsible for his death.

Julius Caesar once was laughed at and hated by his own people before his murder. But he came into human history as a heroic man and admired by those people after his death.

Saddam Hussein stood and

fought for his country.

The whole Muslim world should pay tribute to this man.

Hafiz
Nataipara, Bogra

There is a lesson to be taken from Saddam Hussein's execution. It appeared from the sad ending of Saddam Hussein's life that once his good friend America became his worst enemy when he wanted to hold his head high

as a great leader of the Arab world.

The recent political unrest in Bangladesh is a perfect opportunity for foreign countries to interfere in our internal concerns and clearly they are active in this area. Without any hesitation, they are advising the caretaker government on the mode to make OUR, the Bangladeshi, election a success, and our politicians feel internationally supported-without shame. Why do we allow such

Our government let our people die of starvation. We divide ourselves for religion, sect, tribe and so on.

Please keep writing like this and I invite people like you to come forward and share their views. Maybe one day we will achieve what millions gave their life for.

Here I would like to present an example: if you need blood transfusion, you get that blood from the blood bank. Doctors only match the group of blood not the religion, colour or tribe of the donor.

Please think about this simple matter.

John Francis
Maryland, USA

Disgraceful
Almost every day I receive numerous e-mails from many of my friends with queries and comments regarding the recent turmoil in Bangladesh. Many of them had planned to go to Bangladesh this winter to do internship with Grameen. They cancelled the trip after hearing about the severe and relentless political turmoil. Many of my professors here in the US are also troubled and concerned about the state of the country. Several political science courses in various universities all over the world are doing case studies on our country's political degradation, obviously using Bangladesh as a bad example. One of the comments regarding the situation really struck me hard. It was "How bad can the political parties be in your country?" My question to all the corrupt political leaders is of the same corrupt Bangladesh by your actions?"

Adnan M. S. Fakir
Grinnell College, USA

A bonus to countrymen
I do welcome the changing atmosphere of our country and also welcome the new chief adviser of the caretaker government. Though it could be done two months earlier but nothing good had happened. We were very much anxious and worried about peace and security; the whole nation suffered. We would like to see a correct voter list and a fair election.

Benjamin Gomes



humiliation to our nation? As a Bangladeshi, I find foreign advising sessions a national dishonour. We should remember that America is a nation that refused to recognise Bangladesh in 1971, so be careful when inviting them for advice.

What is even more shocking is that after the death of Saddam Hussein no political leader issued an official statement condemning the execution. We should remember that

I truly appreciate the prudent analyses of Mr. Zahid Hossain in the article 'Iajuddin solely responsible' published in your daily on January 08. I think Mr. Iajuddin assumed the responsibility of the caretaker chief adviser with the plan of conducting an orchestrated election to bring his party of choice to power. A comparison of the previous caretaker government's activities with that of the current one will be enough to make the point clear. The Daily Star's recent news articles about the administrative reshuffle are glaring examples of his partisanship. It is unfortunate that a party like the Awami League which led the liberation war failed to realise the various ploys of the BNP and fell into their trap by declaring to participate in the election. It seems AL leaders are not capable of countering clever moves by their rivals. In politics, right decisions should be taken at the right time.

If Sheikh Mujib had failed to take the right decision in 1971, we wouldn't get an independent country. I think Sheikh Hasina's decision of withdrawing from the election game was a right decision at a wrong time. She missed several key opportunities (one is when the four advisers resigned) to unveil the hidden agenda of the government and withdraw her party from the election even before filing of nomination papers.

It would never be possible to hold a credible election with Mr. Iajuddin as caretaker chief.

Kamal Mostafa
One-mail

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Kamal Mostafa
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Voter list
The Honourable President mentioned in his speech on Jan. 11, 2007 that there are lots of anomalies in the voter list. We, who believe in democracy, expect a reasonably correct voter list and the process of correcting the same must start as soon as possible. The first step may be to put the present voter list in a website utilising the simple inexpensive devices. At least people who are interested to

put their effort voluntarily can verify the list and report back to the Election Commission to expedite the Commission's work. Political parties can also instruct their grassroots level activists to check the list village wise or any other unit wise as the Election Commission deems necessary. NGOs can also participate in this programme. As this will be participated by major political parties, it is expected that the collected information will be reasonably reliable. This will make the voter list more transparent and acceptable to all. However, it must be understood that all agencies outside the Election Commission will only help the Commission as volunteers to prepare a correct voter list in the greater interest of the nation.

K.M. Zainul Abedin
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Bangladesh politics
The people of Bangladesh should express their deep appreciation to the diplomats in Dhaka for bringing our country back from the brink of disaster. The Excellencies have applied subtle and overt pressure and enlisted the support of powerful strongholds like the US State Department, EU, UN Secretary General etc to bring about some sanity in our political arena. They had nothing to gain from this exercise. Their only objective was that Bangladesh should not become another failed state. The main trouble in our politics are the two families who dominate the two main Alliances and there is no love lost between them. They think they have the right to rule and plunder this country whether people want them or not. The ladies at the head of these Alliances are always surrounded by sycophants and remain cut off from the people. Both of them have something in common-- they consider family above the Party and the Party above the country.

It is about time the two women leaders step aside and allow democratisation of their own parties.

Iskander Meah
Dhaka