



Dr. Yunus' comment and politicians' counterattack

Abdul Jalil and Mannan Bhuiyan's defence against Dr. Yunus' comment on politicians smacks of protesting too loudly (DS, 20 January). These protestations would be humorous were they not so pathetic.

Jalil states: "How could he (Yunus) accuse all politicians of dishonesty..." Let's agree that some politicians are dishonest. Aren't most of these "some" the big sharks swimming alongside the top leadership of both the parties? Can Jalil (and Bhuiyan) deny that seats are sold for cash in addition to other considerations, and that close relatives/friends of ministers and other leaders when in power have dubiously amassed tons of money?

Jalil then resorts to a time honoured technique of deflecting attention by accusing the accuser. He requests Dr. Yunus to conduct "surveys...(to) reveal the names who indulged in snuggery and corruption..." and to what extent."

How could he make such absurd statements that insult the intelligence of the people?

Bhuiyan is even more creative. He says, "Politicians...even sacrificed their lives for independence...(hence) can't be in it only for money." To equate the sacrifice of thousands of ordinary people with politicians is gross defamation and distortion of history. Does he include his Jamaat buddies amongst those who sacrificed?

Jalil and Bhuiyan know surveys show the public rate politicians as the lowest of the low amongst various professions. Charity begins at home. They should better spend their time housecleaning than wasting our time with gratuitously insulting observations "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

How is that the AL and the BNP, which couldn't even sit down for a cup of tea, have banded together to bash Dr. Yunus? This suggests that there's no bond stronger than honour amongst humans when their backs are to the wall!

Mumtaz Iqbal, Monipuripara, Dhaka

At last the Awami League and the BNP are sharing the same view about one thing that is the remarks of the Noble Peace Prize winner Dr. Muhammad Yunus about the politicians of the country. They blasted him for his sweeping remarks and termed it as unacceptable and unfortunate.

Yes, we agree with them that the remarks are vexing for the politicians but at the same time is not it a fact that both the parties know who are corrupt in their party, who flex muscles, try to win the election at any cost? We, the common people, know a lot about them. The Awami League and the BNP must know about everyone.

We hope the Awami League and the BNP will think seriously about it.

Nur Jahan, Chittagong

One may criticise Dr Yunus' hyperboles, as I have done with regard to his over-simplified assertions vis-à-vis micro-credit as the panacea for poverty, but the way some leading politicians have ganged up against him for his recent comments on our corrupt politicians is simply silly, offensive and unwarranted. Their offensive self-defence reminds me of the Bengali adage: "Thakur ghare ke rey? Ami kala khai na."

Surprisingly, for the first time, Abdul Jalil and Mannan Bhuiyan, representing the two corrupt and rival political dynasties, the AL and BNP respectively, have found a common ground to grind their axes in public.

Some "leftists" and "former leftists" have also joined the bandwagon to demolish Dr. Yunus. The Workers' Party is the latest to join the foray. Taking Yunus to task for calling a spade a spade, the WP reminded him that politicians had achieved whatever Bangladesh can be proud of, including its independence.

Somebody should tell these narcissist politicians that as a father has no right to kill his children, so politicians responsible for the freedom of Bangladesh have no right whatsoever to rob and destroy the country.

What actually provoked our not so benign and civil politicians to target Dr. Yunus for telling the truth is his latest interview with the AFP. He simply told the interviewer: "Bangladeshi politicians are all for money. It's about power, power to make money. There is no ideological thing, simply who gets the bigger booty..."

Dr. Yunus did not use the expression "politicians" preceded by a "the". So, one does not understand what is the big fuss about his innocuous statement! Can our politicians deny that most of them are inefficient, dishonest, timid and thoroughly corrupt at the same time? If not, they should shut their not-so-clean mouth forever.

One is not sure if to laugh or cry at the following antics by our leaders:

"When he [Yunus] makes sweeping remarks against all politicians [which he did not], it worries the honest politicians and development activists.... His belligerent attitude towards politics as a whole makes us worry [Abdul Jalil, The Daily Star, January 20, 2007]. To Mannan Bhuiyan of the BNP, Dr. Yunus' comments were "not only unacceptable but also unexpected and unfortunate [Prothom Alo, January 20, 2007]."

In view of the above, one may congratulate Dr Yunus for speaking out the truth that most of our politicians are absolutely corrupt, solely responsible for the prevalent anarchic situation, poverty and backwardness of Bangladesh.

It is time that we point out that corrupt politicians have driven away the honest ones from the arena of politics. And the so-called honest ones are equally responsible for giving premium to corruption by acquiescing in dynastic politics, where brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews and in-laws run political dynasties, such as the AL, BNP and JP. Unless the "honest" politicians whom Jalil, Bhuiyan and others are trying to protect refuse to collaborate with their respective "Apa", "Madam" and "Sir" and their corrupt associates, they are equally corrupt by committing the crime in association. So, unless our politicians clean their house by expelling convicted and known criminals, they have no right to condemn Dr. Yunus or anybody else who call them corrupt and associates of the corrupt ones.

Taj Hashmi, On e-mail

Crackdown on criminals

I would like to congratulate Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed on his taking oath as the chief adviser of the caretaker government, although belatedly. As I have come to know from various Bangladeshi newspapers, since the time of his taking control, especially in such a critical juncture filled with challenges, opportunities and potential, Dr. Ahmed has demonstrated a firm attitude while proceeding forward, like an efficient "Manager". He has a very good reputation as the well known and able former governor of Bangladesh Bank. I have great respect for him, and I strongly believe that he will be able to run the show very efficiently towards holding a fair and free election.

Some very effective and trustworthy steps towards holding a fair election, such as making a faultless voter list,

voters' ID card, transparent ballot box, reforming the administration and the Election Commission, tracking down the criminals and many such things are being thought of and talked about.

Which leads me to express my concern about tracking down criminals in the days before the elections, especially by the members of the army deployed for the purpose. In the past, we have seen that the list of criminals is prepared by the local police stations, irrespective of the political party in power. This plays a very strong role in the whole "election engineering" process. The reasons for this deduction are manifold. Usually, while the list of criminals is prepared, criminals linked to the political party (s) in power are excluded and people who extend even the smallest amount of support

towards other political parties are included.

The story hardly ends there. After the election, the winning party candidates and their supporters pounce upon the supporters of the opposition parties, the so-called "criminals" and beat them up or harass them anyway they like.

This is how the legacy of anarchy continues and a democratic and peaceful civilised society remains a far cry, turning all apparent reforms into completely futile efforts towards establishing a livable environment.

As a psychology student always in touch with research, tests and reports, I know the importance of ensuring the participation of every citizen in the elections. If we consider the election as just another huge test, where we are experimenting to find what the popular

public opinion is in choosing their new country leader, we have to first ensure that people from all walks of life irrespective of religion, status, political beliefs, are present there. If that is not done, we would have another test gone badly wrong, and we all know how much we have suffered from previous wrong tests.

In view of this, I urge upon the chief adviser of the caretaker government and his learned and able advisers to look into the issue and take the necessary steps before it is too late and the precious opportunity is gone. Fresh listing of criminals, if possible by the law enforcers with involvement of the concerned political parties, may also be thought of as a measure.

Anannya Das Gupta

Mount Allison University, Canada



Civil society

I don't know all the people who are involved with the so-called civil society and what their goals and means of achieving those goals are. They may have something very sublime in their agenda. I don't have any question about them. But I have a very serious objection to the name of their platform. The very name "civil society" casts aspersions on others.

What do they think about other people who are not in their fold? Only those people who are the civil society members are civil, educated, intelligent, and well bred! And the rest are uncivil, uneducated!

This name is derogatory, denigrating and demeaning for the rest of the nation. So this name should not be used. I would request the civil society to consider my point.

Mohammed Giasuddin

New York, USA

CG's task

When it comes to strategizing and meticulous planning, BNP with its technocratic management is the undisputed winner in the political play of Bangladesh. But even a winning team slips sometimes. Now it is the turn of the four-party alliance headed by the BNP to repent. "Why on earth didn't we agree to the package proposal worked out by the immediate past caretaker government, which they had worked out after strenuous discussions with all recognised political parties?" The package was accepted by all but them.

The new caretaker government, hopefully, will scrutinize the path already treaded by their immediate predecessors and learn a thing or two from that. First and foremost of that is to clearly understand what their task is, which I'm sure they already do i.e. to hold a credible general election for the 9th parliament of the country: Starting with a credible voter roll down to announcing credible results of the election. The catchword is 'credibility'.

The readers will agree with me that credibility is not a subject achieved through discussions; it is achieved through visible actions only. Again it is to be remembered that the truth behind the actions cannot be obfuscated. It is not the quantum of actions but net results derived out of it, which have to be visible and perceived to be fair, exhaustive and honestly done. Individuals may be honest and neutral but that is not good enough, their actions must be seen and perceived to be so.

The honourable advisers will be well advised to monitor the pulse and perception of the ordinary people and act accordingly. This will definitely yield better results

than trying to meet the conflicting interests of all the political parties in the country. The honourable president, I am sure, will live up to the expectations of the general people, in being seen as neutrally functioning in the highest office of the state. He ought to stay firmly in his position till the final dispensation of his duties during the remaining tenure of presidency and help people forget, whatever went wrong in his brief career as the chief adviser of the immediate past caretaker government. This was precisely the advice he got from Nobel Laureate Professor Yunus in the early days of his presidency.

The extra-ordinary intervention by the whole international community individually and collectively through EU and UN was possible because they did monitor the pulse and perception of the people, and I might add, correctly. The international community has a stake in ensuring that democracy does not get derailed in the fourth largest Muslim country in the world. Foreign intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign country is not desirable. But friendly intervention, which coincides with the interest of the people, is always welcome. Now we are fighting a war, if you insist on the metaphor, for justice and fair play.

Waliul Haque Khondker

On e-mail

Politics

People have welcomed the recent changes that took place in Bangladesh.

Political leaders have lost credibility over the last couple of years. Competition among the political leaders in plundering national wealth is far too manifest.

I am a Bangladeshi student, doing PhD in the USA through scholarship given by the US government. I hate Bangladeshi politics, for it has failed to ensure our collective good.

Asif Akter

USA

A pertinent issue

The appointment of an adviser and that of a relative of the chief adviser of the caretaker government make us ask whether there is a dearth of qualified people in our country. As much as our seasoned politicians and 'claimed to be' leaders may make us think in that direction, these actions along with the missteps taken by the President in the past few weeks only highlight that our leaders make too many errors in judgment.

We should not only avoid wrong and bad decisions but also avoid perceptions of bad decisions. And just now we find that his (adviser's) appointment has been cancelled. So much for our politicians and 'non-politician' advisers. Keep it up!

I commend the investigative work done by your daily to expose such things.

M.A Haq

On e-mail

No place for college students?

I am studying LLB (2 yrs Bachelor degree) in Rangpur Law College and I have a plan to study further,

continue it in a university, Dhaka University. No, we don't allow students other than our own." Fine. But can anyone tell me where we, the LLB students of all law colleges of Bangladesh, can turn to if we wish a little more. Yes, one or two private universities have the option but don't the public universities have any responsibility?

Zia ul Haque

Mulatol, Rangpur

this time, "AL killed their (Jamaat's) five supporters on the street."

William Milam says about the situation in Bangladesh, "...out of the four subsequent elections, Bangladesh met one of the two criteria for a working democracy " power passed peacefully from a government to the opposition after credible elections. But it has not met the second test: effective governance in an atmosphere of constructive democratic debate

help bring an end to dynastic leadership, Bangladesh is bound to face more crisis in future; which means there will be more death from violence and poverty.

Abid Bahar

On e-mail

An appeal

Munshiganj is only 15km from Dhaka city. The bridge over the Buriganga has ensured easy communication with Munshiganj by



Improve port facilities

Bangladesh is a small country, no more than the size of the state of Wisconsin of the USA and yet it has half the population of that country. Basically, we have an agrarian economy but mere agriculture cannot support such a large population in this small country. We need rapid industrialization and we also have to change our agricultural practices. Instead of trying to become self sufficient in food we should try to produce value added agricultural products that will fetch good prices from the international market. To support this export led growth we need excellent port facilities, which we do not have right at this moment. We have to develop these facilities.

I feel that this could be developed in three phases. I present below my thoughts on such phased development.

We have to improve the container handling facilities of the Mongla port.

Riverine and road transport facilities from the port to Dhaka have to be improved so that containers can be brought to Dhaka and taken from Dhaka at a competitive rate. Rail transport facilities from the port to North Bengal must also be improved. The inland container port at Pangaon near Dhaka will also have to be made fully operational. Once these improvements are made regular container feeder service to Singapore or Colombo from Mongla can be started. This will increase the total container handling facility of the country and pressure on Chittagong port will substantially reduce.

that is, LLM. But the problem is, there is no option of LLM under National University. Though I am in the mid point of my LLB, I checked out for opportunities to study LLM. This is why I first contacted the Department of Law, Dhaka University. However, the official was awed at my audacity. His tone was like, "You are studying in a law college and you are dreaming to

Why this violence?

The destructive nature of politics in Bangladesh during the past few weeks of the pre-election warm-up time made it appear that it was not necessarily a campaign for democracy but something else. People wonder what is it and why it has to be like this? Mohammed Rahman from New York notes that during

and compromise, leaving the verdict on policy choices up to the voters at elections."

Unless more research is done to identify the sources of violence in Bangladesh politics and Bangladeshis find competent leadership to replace the existing ones; take measures such as restricting the prime minister's term of office to two terms only etc, to

road. Another bridge is being constructed near Mukhtarpur to link Narayanganj with Munshiganj.

I urge the government to set up a polytechnic and a paramedic institute at Munshiganj for the benefit of local people.

Md. Ashraf Hossain

Kolapara, Srinagar

State of emergency, what is next?



President Iajuddin Ahmed has declared the state of emergency apparently finding no other way to come out of the critical situation in the country created by destructive activities of the major political parties, although the question remains how sincerely he tried earlier to solve the crisis within his available means. Now the AL wants fair polls within a "certain period" and the BNP asks for "handing over power to elected government as soon as possible".

If we go through the news in the dailies and also if one tries to read the expressions of general people, then it can be clearly concluded that there is a sigh of relief all over the country after the declaration of the state of emergency. If the present CG is able to hold a free, fair and impartial election what the people & the country will get? A government of AL or BNP! The

same history of bad governance, corruption, looting and plundering of public money will be repeated because none of these two major political parties and their so-called allies do care for the people and the country. Crippling the country's economy through blockade & hartal while not in power and planned corruption & looting while in power are their ultimate goals. But it is an irony that they all claim that the fourteen crore people of this country are with them!

Most of the nonpartisan people now think and desire: The state of emergency may last longer to hold a free and fair election by the CG not to ensure return of either the AL or the BNP but to ensure that honest people are elected to the parliament. This can only happen if the criteria of eligibility for Member of

Parliament are carefully formulated and implemented without influence of black money and muscle power.

-During the last few months many innocent people were killed, property damaged, industries put on fire etc. This neutral / caretaker government can take necessary measures against those responsible for these misdeeds and insulting the nation by making it first on earth in corruption.

The present chief of the caretaker government Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed is a man well known for his integrity and having a track record that will enable him to take the challenges for the tough job that he has been entrusted with. We wish him success.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque

Khalishpur, Khulna