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Fakhruddin and Yunus are right

After the resignation of President Iajuddin Ahmed from the post of CA, newly appointed CA Fakhruddin Ahmed remained tight lipped for a week. But his Sunday night speech to the nation has inspired us to dream of a positive and progressive Bangladesh through a credible and acceptable general election with the participation of all the major political alliances. His speech was totally based on the current circumstances and his way of thinking for solving the political impasse has highly been appreciated by the members of civil society and the people in general. So far the moves his government has taken also indicate that he has the will and determination for making a way out of this polluted politics.

Moreover, the general people of this country are feeling a lot better now since they no longer have to go through any more blockades or hartals, they no longer have to witness any violence on the streets. People are breathing a sigh of relief because the footpaths are no longer in control of the hawkers. People can rather roam freely there. The so-called syndicate seems to be no longer in operation and the price spiral of essentials has come down remarkably. The controversial CEC MA Aziz has also resigned from his post and the reconstitution of the Election Commission is now just a matter of time. So we have all the indications toward a peaceful resolution of all the disputes of the major political alliances and definitely CA Fakhruddin Ahmed deserves our kudos for doing all these. Even though he has a long way to go, I must say he is on the right track now and he should keep it up.

Regarding the recent comments about our politicians, Nobel laureate Prof

Yunus has been subjected to serious criticism, which has made me feel extremely sorry for the honourable son of this soil. There might be differences of opinion, but I must say Yunus has said the right thing. I know not all the politicians are corrupt and doing politics for earning money. However, most of them are doing politics for earning money and have no shame for doing this. They have no love for the people and the country; rather they are doing politics for their own welfare. Almost all the politicians are living in luxury apartments, riding expensive cars. Most of these luxury items they use have come from the hard earned money of the people of Bangladesh. That is why even after 36 years of independence,

our politicians are living a life of luxury but most people of this country are still living in extreme poverty. So rather than blaming a person like Yunus, our politicians should ask themselves about their misdeeds. If they were really honest, then why are most of the corrupt politicians now running out of the country to avoid arrest by the law enforcers in the recent drive taken by the new CA?

Nazmus Saquib
Bashaboo, Dhaka

We, the ordinary citizens of this country, welcome you as the chief of the interim government. We expect too much from you, but we also understand that you are constrained by the constitutional obligations to not extend the duration of your stay in power. However, we do appeal to you to ensure some of the things, which we believe you can do within the constitutional framework.

First, please restore discipline in the market of essential commodities. As an economist yourself, you can as well understand the intolerable sufferings we are faced with due to the continuous price hike of the commodities. Most of us cannot afford to buy the basic commodities that we need to survive because of the unbridled price hiking.

Second, please do bar the loan defaulters from running in the upcoming election. As a former governor of our central bank, you do understand that they have violated the basic economic principles governing a country by defaulting on repaying the huge loans, taken mostly from the nationalized banks. If you let them go scot-free, many in future will be encouraged to do so, thus ruining our already fragile economy.

Third, please do not gag the media. This is the only source we have to know about what is going on in our country. As an economist, you are well aware that a free press can help stabilize the market forces working within the parameters of the law by exposing the corrupt syndicates involved in price hike.

Sir, we do feel you will be under tremendous pressure from different lobbyists, corrupt bureaucrats and self-seeking individuals to fulfil their desires and demands, but as long as you do not give in to them, you will get our unflinching support to run the country smoothly.

AFM Mohiuddin
Lalmatia, Dhaka

The disgrace we go through

As a very humble citizen, whenever I observe my beloved Bangladesh, I sincerely feel proud of it and thank the Almighty. I am one of millions of innocent, silent and peace loving citizens and always pray for the betterment of our beloved motherland. I believe in liberal thinking and naturally do not belong to any political or ideological group and very consciously keep myself away from intellectual slavery. I am continually struggling to live honestly with my meagre income and so far have lived with peace of mind.

I feel extremely happy when Bangladesh or any of her citizens, like Dr. Yunus, achieves anything good and get terribly upset when anything opposite happens.

Politics in the country has gone down to deplorable levels and the people who have been running the show have proved themselves not only imbecilic but also apathetic to public concerns. The intellectuals of our country have their own shortcomings and do not see anything wrong with what the political parties they are aligned to are doing. They do not protest killing of political opponents in broad day light by hired street goons, which by any standard is a very despicable act, nor do they try to find out and expose the hidden wealth of notorious individuals.

Many student leaders are allegedly criminals, millionaires, decision makers and they move in latest model cars, while a class of teachers are aligned to political alliances and try to survive by becoming sycophants and self-seekers.

Judges like Justice M.M. Murshed are becoming an extinct species. And to add to the overall misery, some of the proud custodians of our legal profession and system have done things that raise questions about their integrity. I am shocked and dumbfounded.

But even in this gloomy situation we find there are very respected persons in the country. There are so many unsung heroes and patriots all over Bangladesh.

Normally the area we used to consider for availability of such persons, namely, the education sector and judiciary have been polluted through the introduction of dirty and party politics. One glaring example is that we had difficulty selecting individuals as advisors to the caretaker government. However, there is a silver lining on the horizon. We hope the situation in the judiciary would improve through a separation of it from the executive. But we also need to do something for the education sectors. Let us depoliticise the educational institutions, both teachers and students. Let all the living ex-vice-chancellors form a

committee, which will deliberate, debate and through secret voting will recommend ways as to how we can move out of this rut. They are all very respected persons and will surely want the system to be put on the rails once again. Undoubtedly they are going to be remembered for their contributions to society. Moreover, all these good meaning persons should join hands and establish a platform and contribute something to the country and act as guardians of society. They should not support any political party any more, should not condone any political mischievousness or should not have any personal motive. They can reshape and rebuild the political culture of society where future generations will learn that politics is not business but service to the people. I earnestly call upon the caretaker government to find the ways and means of checking the downside in our system, our values and morality. The way anti-liberation elements have been dictating terms and the way the two big political parties have shamelessly been wooing corrupt persons, godfathers and criminals is outrageous.

Our politicians should explain how they meet their family expenses and become owners of banks and television channels.

MS Zoha
On e-mail

Our politics

The past three or four months have perhaps seen the most dramatic series of events in the Bangladeshi politics. The nation had been witnessing an unforeseen turbulence, as the BNP led alliance party was busy implementing their plot, which they had so wittily hatched while being in power. In the face of the rising flame of violence, as enraged activists of the AL led grand alliance staged unprecedented demonstrations in the streets, the

murky plot of the BNP led alliance party to manipulate the election has slowly fallen in complete disarray.

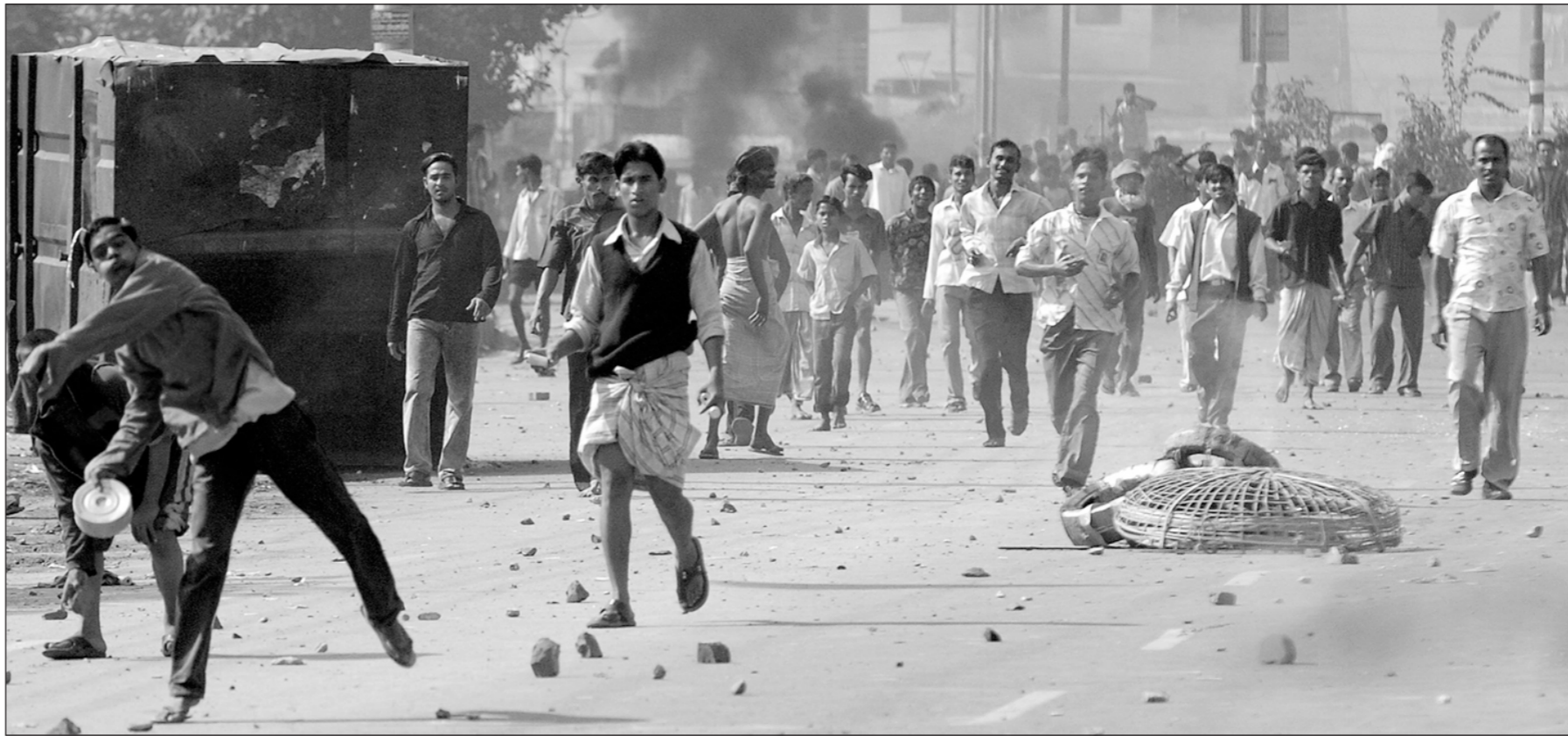
Ever since then, everything has turned a new leaf and the nation now can perceive a light of hope at the end of the tunnel. All thanks go to the present CA of the caretaker government, Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, who is now playing a highly commendable role towards the holding of a free, fair and credible election with an updated voters' list

and a full reconstitution of the problem ridden EC. The former governor of Bangladesh Bank has done what no body could do: he made the controversial Justice MA Aziz resign. The CG is also working towards the issuing of a national ID or voters' ID card, which is a bold step on part of the interim government and a prerequisite to holding an unrigged election. These have all been possible due to the boldness of Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed. I hope his able

leadership will steer the nation out of this problem stricken situation.

But is it the end of all our problems? We are marching towards averting a farcical election, but then? The nation must ponder over this: What goes away comes back again. Yes, I am talking about any further political turmoil resurfacing in our democratic country. After all, it is all about the rotten state of Bangladeshi politics.

Md. Sabbir Saadat
European Standard School (ESS)



Saddam's execution

I was following the reflections of Saddam's execution expressed by different authors / writers and published in the daily Star since the historic incident took place on 30 December 2006. Titles of the articles were "Saddam a victim of vendetta", "Vengeance of the victors", "Saddam takes his secrets to the grave", "A ventriloquist of death" etc. There is no doubt majority are of the opinion that Saddam Hussein got what he deserved. One of the writers rightly pointed out that part of the rope which hanged Saddam Hussein was his own creation and the Americans gave him enough rope to hang himself. But the truth says that the Iraqi court gave the

American verdict and the Iraqi hangmen executed an American prisoner so that American wrath worked through the Iraqi retribution.

Former Iraqi president and strongman Saddam Hussein is no more. But his name will be remembered for a long time and how he will finally be judged by history is something to be decided by time. But there are facts that show that he was once a friend of America, which finally sent him to the gallows. It is clear like daylight that Saddam fought an eight-year war with Iran with direct help from the USA. Many even believe that he attacked Kuwait after receiving the green signal from the USA.

The USA occupied Iraq on the

false pretext that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction, which he constantly kept on denying, and the weapons inspectors, mostly Americans, also found none. Saddam occupied his neighbour Kuwait for a short period for his dispute with them on share of oil fields. But the US occupation of Iraq appears to be a never-ending story.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna

Stop games with the jobless

Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries of the world. The age of the country is more than 35 years. Till now, it has remained trapped in

a poverty cycle. But many countries, which were in similar conditions, previously have now overtaken us and are considered to be developed countries. The employment problem is one of the burning issues in our country. There has been no proper industrialization. Corruption, bureaucracy, red tape, etc., only make the situation more critical. Hundreds, indeed thousands of applications are submitted against a single post. Today, a group of people open a peculiar cheating business in the name of providing jobs to jobless people. On the other hand, the government plays another type of game with these people, such as requiring bank drafts, attestation, nationality certificate, all of which make life even more miserable for these unemployed people. Recently, the government organized a second teachers' registration examination. We would like to know from the Ministry of Education about the various objectives behind the teachers' registration examination.

Firstly, what is the main objective of that examination? It was said in the first teachers' registration that it approved a group of people who were fit for the teaching profession. But such a method does not give any surety for appointing giving one a job in the teaching field. It is also said that an educational institute can appoint a person as a teacher on the basis of viva examination.

This is done only to prevent

illegal appointments through taking bribes. But in reality, whether we observe the details of the job circular in the dailies, obtain bank drafts for hundreds of taka, have attested copies of academic transcripts, nothing really helps.

Secondly: the fees of the examination, with the syllabus book are 435 tk and without the book 425 tk. This is an examination for a certificate without the surety of a job coming along. This costly certificate reminds us of the character of Shylock in Shakespeare. The Public Service Commission (PSC), responsible for employing people in government jobs, does not take as much money for the BCS examinations or other non gazetted employment examinations. There are more steps in the PSC organized examinations such as preliminary, written, psychology, viva, police verifications, health checking, etc., but the PSC takes below four hundred taka. One can only echo Alexander Selkirk, "Oh Seleucus! What a peculiar country this is!"

Peter Gomes
Court Road, Dinajpur

25 years of service vis-a-vis retirement

One is supposed to retire from the service of the government and autonomous bodies on attaining 57 years of age. One may also opt for early retirement on completion of 25 years of service. This should be his privilege to suit the circumstances of his life and future. But strangely enough, in our country the authorities also reserve the right to fire anyone from service

without assigning any reason at the end of 25 years of service, which is tantamount to a gross violation of fundamental and constitutional rights. One should have the basic right to serve till the age of 57 years, while retaining the privilege to opt for retirement after 25 years of service.

It is known to all that employees have been crying loud ever since for a raising of the retirement age to 60 years in line with the practice in many other countries. But till date the government has added not a single day to the retirement age bar though it keeps promising the same before and after coming to power. It is rather used as a carrot to win their support while early retirement option is exercised as a weapon to subdue the employees and buy their loyalty. Innocent, neutral, honest employees as also employees having different political views remain in constant fear of losing their jobs and livelihood in the middle stage of their service life. They are also victimized and harassed every now and then in many ways. This is counter productive, inhuman and undemocratic.

Funnily enough, in contrast to the above, the last government without assigning any reason arbitrarily enhanced the retirement age of High Court judges, thus bringing in disaster for the country. Possession of such wholesale power and its reckless use by the government in office must be curbed through political reforms and this is the time to do that on the part of the caretaker government. The CG seems to be a blessing for this hapless and unfortunate nation, which has been humiliated and used as pawns by the political governments for so long. We also should not forget the fact that there is no substitute for experience and towards the fog end of service the employees contribute immensely to the ultimate benefit of the nation. Early retirement deprives the nation of the good work these people do.

A.B.M. Zakaria
East Shewrapara, Mirpur, Dhaka

Pride of Bangladesh

This is a comment relating to Pride of Bangladesh. It is not a politically motivated commentary.

The World Economic Forum has chosen our respected Sheikh Hasina's son, as one of the Global Leaders of today. The article read this:

"After moving to the US, he founded Mvion Inc., a startup company through which he developed prototype software and raised US\$ 8 million in venture capital. Mvion eventually brought in revenues of approximately US\$ 2,00,000 per month and was evaluated at US\$ 80-90 million."

I have been studying outside for a long time and understand how venture capitals work. I wonder who would invest \$8 million dollars on such a project.

By the way \$8 million dollars translate to \$5,600 crore taka.

A concerned citizen
Canada

Bush, Iran and terrorism

US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates, who is currently visiting the Middle East to shore up the support of Middle Eastern countries, has cautioned Iran that proper action will be taken against Tehran if it poses a threat to the peace and stability of the Middle East. However, many Congressional leaders in the US say that it is just rhetoric on Gates' part to appease the Middle Eastern leaders, especially King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. It is reported that many lawmakers, both Republican and Democrat, think that President Bush has already chalked out a plan to attack Iran mainly to take care of its closest ally Israel from any casualties that might be caused by Iran since Tehran is fast emerging as a country which will possess a deadly nuclear arsenal as quickly as possible. Iran has from the very beginning been resisting the super quartet (US, UK, France and Germany) and has stated that its main reason for enriching uranium is to generate power and nothing else. But the quartet has insisted that Iran's sole intention in enriching uranium

is to make atomic bombs only. President Bush doesn't believe Iran, hence with his insistence and power he managed to pull veto wielding powers China and Russia who were against the sanctions in his favour and made the Security Council slap sanctions against Iran for defying the international community. Whatever the case, we believe that as a signatory to the non-proliferation treaty Iran has all the right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes.

If Bush administration can sign a deal with India to supply it with nuclear fuel for its poor stations (besides, India is not a signatory to the NPT), why this such harsh treatment of Iran? We all hope that the American people as well as Republican and Democrat politicians will force Bush to abandon his plan and help to avoid making Iran another Iraq and so contain further bloodshed and escalation of terrorism in the Middle East.

Humayun Hyder
Jhigatola, Dhaka