

AFP

# Breathing space for a new party?

**Are we witnessing the beginning of a new political re-alignment, asks Farid Bakht. And if so, what does this auger for the nation?**

THE democratic experiment is over. We could chant: "Democracy is dead. Long live techno-military government."

In Bangkok, people power (actually wealthy middle-class urban) plus the revered king sent the politicians packing.

In Dhaka, political rent-a-crowds caused chaos. There are no kings in Bangladesh, though one or two Western ambassadors seem eager to fill that role.

So do we say this has been a modern Bengali coup, nothing like those of the bloody 70s?

In many ways I hold contrarian views, whether in politics or in investments. This is another way of saying that I am not always right, though it is more interesting and painful! So I am at odds with the prevailing middle class view again.

They seem to be relieved, relaxed, and hopeful.

I would request the leading intellectuals who feel this way to please record their support. Some have already done so and it is, therefore, recorded for posterity. Once posted on the net, you can always be googled and can never deny your collaboration convincingly.

In a few years, this will be important in sorting out the opportunists and collaborators from the progressives and true democrats. Right now, it does not matter.

What do the intellectual fans of military democracy hope will happen?

The sentimental Awami oriented ones may pine for something like this: The voter list will be patched up. Elections will be held this winter, if at all. The two main political parties will be arm twisted to participate. If they do not, expect some prominent leaders to face corruption charges and jail. This allows the erstwhile opposition alliance to win with a whopping majority. This is officially an alliance of the Awami League, Liberal Democratic Party, and Jatiyo Party. It really means that the three families of Mujib, B Chowdhury, and ex-General Ershad get the spoils.