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Crusade against crime

We all thought that finally the days of political criminals were numbered when the army started to arrest a few crime bosses, criminals with political affiliation, etc. Needless to say, the ruling party had stolen the bulk of the money from public funds. The newspapers in Bangladesh also ran stories about how the people close to the ruling party became multimillionaires overnight.

I urge Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, the newly appointed Chief Advisor of the caretaker government, to give orders to the law enforcers to apprehend all the criminals who are connected with the major political parties.

The emergency declaration in Bangladesh was not greeted with an open arm by people who prefer democracy over oligarchy (a government by a few influential people) but these select few people who are at the helm may do something which will not be possible for any democratically elected government in Bangladesh. Thus a fantastic opportunity is literally knocking at the door. What are we waiting for?

Maybe, I am expecting too much from the caretaker government whose mandate is only to prepare the nation for a fair and unbiased election.

The people of Bangladesh will remember for a long time

and they would go out of their way to thank Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed and his council of advisers if his caretaker administration could rid the society of criminals with political connection. It can be done. Why not go for it?

A.H. Jaffor Ullah
New Orleans, USA

I have been trying to keep up with the "spring cleaning" of the government from abroad. I just want to point out that it seems like most of the arrestees do not feel like they are going through a humiliating experience. I wonder what they are thinking when they actually smile and laugh at the cameras while they're being taken away to detention centres! A lot of them are even boasting about the way they fought for the freedom of our country! My response to that: So that gives you the right to steal the country's money and other people's rights?

Do they not understand that they are being taken away because they are facing serious charges? Do they really think the "V" they are making with their fingers implies that they are "good" people being abused by the "bad" ones? Does the "V" make these people "heroes"? When will they (and their families and so-

No need to rush

After the caretaker govt. was formed and it started a drive against corruption and crime, all political parties suddenly came under one roof. They want polls very soon. Why are they so afraid? Why do they think that the problems of 15 years could be solved within a few months? Corruption and disorder have polluted the society. It is easy to break but hard to build. Our politicians have destroyed every system and institution in our country. We should give enough time to the caretaker government to set things right.

We cannot trust the politicians. That's serious problem and it is up to the politicians to give a better account of themselves.

Reaz Fahme
Dhaka

Awami League and BNP

These days we hear many stories about how politicians have ruined everything and how they have corrupted almost every institution. In some talk shows people are even comparing Bangladesh to Pakistan, and they think that it's about time our politicians are sent to rest and somebody else should rule the country. No matter what has happened, we should realise that people of Bangladesh have a strong democratic leaning and the fact remains that the Awami League and the BNP are the only parties we can look forward to at the moment to carry on the torch of democracy. Instead of blaming them for everything, we should concentrate on the problem on our hands and take precautions so that it does not happen again.

Everyone should analyse which party has done better things for the country and has the potential to lead it better. Then it is the responsibility of the people to vote for that particular party for the betterment of the country. This period is a wake-up call for everyone.

If people boycott and protest against the nomination of a corrupt leader, the party has to think twice before nominating him.

Bishen Sen
Lake Circus, Kalabagan, Dhaka

Voter ID card

It has been proposed that we should have voter ID before holding the parliamentary election. This is a prescription for disaster, such attempt will only guarantee that there will be no election in near future and chaos will continue in Bangladesh. In the United States (where I live) and in most countries of the world they do not need any ID to cast vote in most elections. Voter ID is not a bad idea but it will definitely take longer time than one may guess. Moreover, it will be expensive and will have more mistakes than one which will be acceptable. Many years ago I worked as a returning officer in a Bangladeshi election. I can tell from experience that voter ID is not absolutely essential here. Outside big cities, local voters in most cases know each other. As a result, possibility of fraudulent vote is rare and such votes will not have any substantive effect on any election. Let's go on with our elections. We have problems in our constitution which can be resolved only after the election. Failure to hold election on time will bring bad news for the people of Bangladesh.

M. Talukder
On e-mail

The caretaker government

It is heartening to see that the appointment of the new caretaker government under the leadership of Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed has succeeded in halting the political and social turmoil the country was going through. Those who know Dr. Ahmed are full of praise for him for his honesty and professional competence. However, the success of the new caretaker government will depend to a large extent on the confidence of the people in its competence, neutrality and integrity. Dr. Ahmed has chosen his ten Advisers and the rumour has it that he is likely to choose some more. In selecting the Advisers his performance has been somewhat mixed.

The past political regimes of the BNP and the Awami League were notorious for their dynastic designs and blatant nepotism. People expect far more probity and scrupulousness from the caretaker government. We expect that the caretaker government of Dr. Ahmed will succeed for the sake of the nation.

We would therefore strongly advise Dr. Ahmed not to tread the path of the political parties which has brought them only disaster and general distrust of the people.

Panini Ahmed
Boston

citizen should have an identity card and without an identity in a country like Sweden, a person does not exist. Benefits of an identity card for each and every citizen are many and varied.

Introducing identity cards for the coming election in Bangladesh will scare the false voters even though to maintain 100% honesty may not be possible in the ocean of corruption. Fair and free election would surely install a popular government but again, what about corruption-free good governance?

The present difficult situation in Bangladesh has also given the nation a golden opportunity to lay the strong foundation for a better government in the future. To ensure that, introducing the identity card for every citizen can be considered the first step and it should be supported by two more important reforms immediately. These reforms are change in voting and administrative system.

Actions should and must be taken by presidential decree, if the sacred constitution stands as an obstacle, to make these changes before the forthcoming election. The following points can be considered for an overall improvement.

a. Change the present voting system. Proportional voting system should be introduced replacing the present majority voting system. Proportional voting system guarantees fair representation, invites and encourages honest people in politics; vote buying and the role of "mastans" become to some extent useless. All the developed countries in the world follow proportional voting system except the UK and the USA. Political corruption in these two countries, especially in the USA, is more rampant due their rotten voting system compared with Europe, Japan and Australia.

b. Bring changes in the administrative system.

The present administrative system should be changed making room for a new efficient administrative system. The Upazila and Zilla Parishads should be abolished immediately and the main local government body of the country should be the Union Parishad. This local government should be responsible for local administration, healthcare, education, justice and law and order in each and every union. The big cities should be broken into different Union Parishads replacing the present municipalities and corporations. Even though the election system in the UK and the USA is primitive, still the administration in these countries functions well due to their strong local governments. This letter is not the right place to explain everything but those who care may kindly go through the local government systems in Scandinavian countries and Germany to have a better understanding of the subject.

To change the constitution or to make a presidential decree legitimate for introducing the above things may take time but they are worth waiting for and it would be wise to get things done well before the forthcoming election.

Tayeb Husain, Lund, Sweden

Do justice to the honest

Nowadays we see there are lots of investigative reports on various malpractices in the form of corruption, nepotism, extortion, abuse of power by the influential and beneficiaries of the government in different sectors. We would welcome and appreciate the media's efforts to unearth the various gross violations of rules and regulations in order to politicize the administration by promoting & placing corrupt and incompetent people in important positions. I think this is the right time to mitigate the distress of the honest & meritorious (deprived) individuals in the government.

Anonymous
Chittagong

Weekly holiday

It is better to have weekly holidays on Saturday and Sunday. It will match our system with that of the rest of the world. The government should not pay heed to those who are in favour of Friday as weekly holiday. I do not see any problem in offering Jumma prayers on Friday, even if it is a working day, if someone has the willingness to do so.

Razib Mohammad
Canberra, Australia

Where are the basic necessities?

It seems that all the countries in the world are going forward in terms of development in all sectors. But the people of this country are still fighting over trivial matters like which party will win the next elections.

But I am really sorry to say that we are yet to provide the basic necessities of life.

The media has yet to report on the water supply situation in Chittagong. Wasa is supplying salty water for the last 10-15 days and it seems that no one is concerned about this matter. I would like to know why is Ctg Wasa supplying this water? And do they

have any plans to improve the situation? Its pretty tough for a middle class family like mine to buy bottled water.

I would like to draw the attention of the Wasa authorities to our plight.

Asad
On e-mail

No incoming calls

The government's role is appreciable as it's doing its best to reform the government machinery. It's coming down heavily on corrupt politicians and godfathers and setting an exemplary instance that nobody is above the law. We all Bangladeshis living abroad thank the caretaker government for its strong and courageous role.

Unfortunately, Bangladeshis living abroad have not been able to call their family members in the past few weeks. It seems that all foreign incoming calls are being blocked. Only outgoing calls from Bangladesh are an exception. Bangladeshis living abroad contribute significantly directly and indirectly to the economic development of Bangladesh. It's very sad that they are being cut off from their family members due to incoming blockage of telephone calls in Bangladesh. This is an unbearable punishment for all those who live thousands of miles apart from home for economic reasons.

We would appreciate if the caretaker government looks into the matter on a priority basis.

Mohammad Jamal
Scarborough, Canada

Why only politicians?

The drive against corrupt (not only politicians) by the interim government is commendable which was a long cherished demand of the people. To eliminate corruption and malpractice from society and in the administration is one of the prime duties of the politicians. Our major political parties have failed to perceive this truth. Of course, few politicians and civil society members have voiced this issue many times but the party high-ups did not respond. The immediate past government, which got absolute majority in the parliament, has ruined the key organs of the state.

We all know how the extremists killed people with the tacit support of the ministers and MPs. Job seekers know how the PSC members have ruined this institution. University teachers have seen their fellow colleagues being killed on the campus. The list of wrongdoings can be made longer and longer.

Politicians could have played a role to halt all sorts of anti-people and anti-state activities. Thus we can blame them. But I think it would be unfair to hold only politicians responsible for all these misdeeds. Civil servants, university teachers, businessmen and even the so-called media people have accumulated huge amount of money through their connections with the political parties.

So I urge the present government to crack down on them.

Malik Akram Hossain
HKU

The ruined PSC

The last four BCS examinations were highly controversial. Some strong allegations (of wrong doing) against some members of the PSC are there. Question linkage was a very common phenomenon in the last four examinations. Why should PSC be politicised? Whose interest is served by such politicisation? Corrupt personnel from a constitutional body like the PSC must be removed immediately. And we think it is high time to take stern actions against them. Another point is the allocated quota for different categories of applicants which permits undue exercise of powers.

So, in this regard the right decision should be taken; otherwise competent candidates will be deprived of the opportunities to serve the country. And the problem of ineffective, dysfunctional, polarized, biased administrative structure will compel us to face a dire situation (already we are facing similar type of problems which were all created by us).

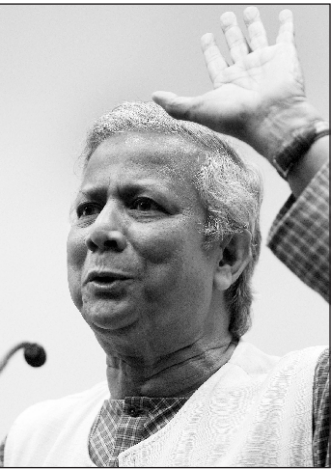
My request to the present interim government is: Please take the initiative to set things right at the PSC's vital organisation.

Alam Hossain
On e-mail

Why this age bar?

"The age of the candidates must be at least 25." It has been said in a circular for the candidates seeking appointment as headmaster of a govt. primary school published in different dailies on different dates. Who are those policy makers? I want them to let us know the logic behind their policy. Why have they put this age bar?

Anisur Rahman
On e-mail



Go ahead, Dr. Yunus

I am so happy with the crackdown on the politicians. These people will get what they deserve. They have looted this country for a long time. I am not condemning either of the two major parties but I am condemning their activities and corruption. This current drive against corruption will have a sustained impact on the Bangladesh economy if we can elect honest and educated MPs in the next general election.

I believe that Dr. Yunus should form a political party which will have honest people to serve this country. If I am asked, I will join his political party.

Eng. M. M. Chowdhury
On e-mail

Nobel laureate Professor Yunus is showing his interest to launch a new political party. I think we will be greatly benefited if he really joins politics.

Saif Tinku
On e-mail

Not a scholar's job

I read the news on Professor Yunus that if circumstances push him he might join politics (01 Feb, 2007). I, however, don't believe that he should ever be pushed, or forced by anyone, into politics. Prof. Yunus is a scholar, a Nobel laureate, why should he be involved in politics?

Why should he take the dirt? Every political group in this world, check out history if you don't believe me, has both shares of success and failure on different issues. Do you disagree? Of course you don't. So I don't think, after all he had done, this great man should be pushed into anything that might make him controversial in the near future.

Why do you think God has put brain inside the head, well protected, instead of putting it outside? The hand and the legs do the work, the brain instructs. Prof. Yunus is our brain; let others do the work.

It has been proved that there are many capable people in this country to steer us onto the right track. Aren't our present chief advisor and other advisors an example?

I agreed with Prof. Yunus, when he said, "Clean people must take part in the elections even if it takes time to ensure that. Otherwise, the same problem will crop up again. Now we have a chance of a lifetime to cleanse our politics."

And so my point is, there are many honest, clean, efficient people in this country who are interested in politics; they could be convinced to get into politics.

Prof. Yunus could be a permanent adviser to help any elected government. Any government can take advice from him and his board, but why make him take this huge responsibility?

Prof. Yunus, whoever is pressurizing you to take the responsibility of becoming a politician is not being rational. Please think twice about it.

Sumaiya Zulfikar
Gulshan, Dhaka

Removal of street shops

Although, I highly appreciate removal of street shops by the law enforcers, I would like to draw the government's attention to the fact that this effort could only solve the problem on a temporary basis. Beautification of the roads is necessary and the pedestrians are benefited from this, but we must not overlook the fact that the daily income of these street vendors is dependent

on their business. Many a time the mobile salesmen were driven out from the streets and many a time they have survived through bribing the police.

The common people especially the middle-class and the low-income people are benefited by purchasing things from these "small" businessmen on the street because we can buy things within the reach of our

affordability. Without them it would be difficult for us to buy the same things from the posh markets at high prices.

I would, therefore, like to suggest that the government address the issue in right earnest.

Naome Syed
Asad Avenue, Mohammadpur

