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Power shortage some suggestions

May I suggest a few points to the present adviser to the ministry of energy and natural resources to cope with the power crisis.

a) In all offices, shops, residential/commercial buildings and industries use of energy saving lamps should be made compulsory. It will save almost 300 MW of power.

b) In summer, all air-conditioning systems in the offices, residential/commercial buildings, shopping malls, except hospitals and other emergency purposes, should remain inoperative. This will also save a huge amount of power.

c) Unnecessary illumination in shops, displays, ceremonies must be banned.

d) Severe punishment for illegal use of electricity may be introduced within the shortest possible time both for users and officials

involved in such theft of electricity. Punishment should be given summarily to the culprits.

e) All the "Palli Biddyt Samity" branches should be entrusted with building power generating houses (with the capacity of at least 20MW) where gas is available. They can be provided with loans in cheaper rates of interest from commercial banks where surplus money is lying idle. In this way about 1,000 MW of power can be generated within a year or so.

A high powered committee with competent persons and expertise can advice the govt. in this matter for selecting the power generating machinery. I am a layman, not an expert, but the energy ministry may take into account these points with the other options that they have.

Z A Majumder
Mirpur, Dhaka

Popular expectations

We are general people but aware citizens of the country. We never were completely satisfied with the activities of the previous caretaker government. We wanted a neutral and non-political person as our chief of the caretaker government who would be the saviour of the country's derailed democracy. Now we have got that, so we think that the chief adviser of the caretaker government has added a new chapter to the political history of Bangladesh. After taking oath the caretaker govt. has made a significant impact on most of the sectors.

We feel assured hearing his unambiguous statement about preparation of a flawless voter list, holding of a free, fair and credible election acceptable to the nation and the international community.

We know that most of our politicians do not follow the democratic rules but claim themselves as patriotic politicians. But their activities prove that there is a big gap between what they preach and what they practise.

So we would like to convey a message to the political parties- please wait, wait until a fresh election schedule is announced. Let us give the government the time to set things right.

Only then the government will be able to hand over power to a truly representative, elected government.

AM Palash
Zia Hall, University of Dhaka

winner. Yet, a few days later, Dr. Yunus indicated that he too might some day join politics. Is he trying to follow the old dictum that "if you cannot beat them, join them?" by extrapolating Dr. Yunus' observations about all politicians (as corrupt), one could also unethically generalise that all NGOs are corrupt and only interested in making money.

It is well known that, in Bangladesh, many NGOs have mushroomed at local levels solely for making quick money and are clandestinely run as profit making enterprises. Such enterprises undoubtedly bring bad name to the world of NGOs, just as many corrupt politicians tarnish the image of good ones. Hence, a Nobel Peace Prize winner should have avoided making rash generalisations.

Lastly, to set the record straight, it should be added that micro credit in Bangladesh was first introduced by BRAC, and not by Grameen Bank.

A disappointed Bangladeshi
Dhaka

Simply unacceptable!

The head of the last government called upon the children of Bangladesh to become good citizens of the country!

What a farce, what an irony, that the person who was responsible for running the most corrupt government in the annals of Bangladesh talked about character building. (DS: Feb.16).

Frustrated Bangladeshi
One e-mail

Stream water

A few days back I had an opportunity to attend a meeting organised by the Ministry of Agriculture for preparing the "SAARC Agricultural Vision 2020: Bangladesh perspective" document as per decision taken in the last SAARC Agriculture/Food Ministers meeting held in Islamabad.

The Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, who presided over the above meeting informed us about the outcome of the Islamabad Meet. Decisions have been taken to upgrade the SAARC Agricultural Information Centre (SAIC) in Dhaka and to form SAARC regional food bank.

Meanwhile, the Additional Secretary said that in the Islamabad meet he had raised an important issue relating to the use of stream water which is so abundant in most of the SAARC countries including Bangladesh. I strongly feel that not only the SAARC but other international development agencies should also ponder over the above issue because streams can ensure availability of fresh water for drinking, irrigation and other purposes. For instance, there are a number of natural streams in Cox's Bazar, Chittagong and Sylhet, water from these streams is not being used but wasted!

I sincerely hope that SAARC and other international development agencies will look into the matter.

Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Dhaka

Overhauling the PSC

In conformity with the address of the chief adviser to the secretaries on 23rd January, 2007 and along with the reconstitution of all other constitutional bodies like, Election Commission and Anti-Corruption Commission, I feel the most vital organ of the state, i.e., Public Service Commission also needs thorough overhauling. In the last few years, it has earned enough bad name for its inefficiency, nepotism and administrative slackness. It has not only eroded its position of respectability and confidence but also it is presently known as a den of corruption.

With limited experience as a member of the final selection board from time to time, I always felt that there is something very wrong in the working system of the PSC. Upright, efficient and capable members of the commission are either sidetracked or not given much importance. There are controversial persons and members who even do not follow the techniques of conducting an interview. They do not ask probing questions and at times start abusing or ridiculing the candidates and talk all the time instead of giving opportunity to the interviewees who are in fact supposed to talk most of the time.

The PSC can obviously regain its prestigious and dignified position by association of persons who are considered men of integrity, conscience and free from political alignment. Before appointment as members their credentials should be thoroughly checked and verified by the government.

In the interview board all assessors should be allowed to mark individually and secretly, instead of the present consensus marking system and the number of interviewers may be increased to a minimum of five. In a consensus marking board members are unduly influenced and they at times remain helpless not being in a position to exercise their good judgment. In this context, I fail to understand what the PSC has recently gained by walking to the opposite direction and discarding the age-old practice of keeping one psychologist in each board.

Again interviewers for each board should not only be selected from bureaucrats and professors of university and colleges but dignified and outstanding teachers from the schools can also be invited. Names of respectable persons of the society may be maintained and they may also be included in the selection process.

One who knows
On e-mail

State of emergency

Declaration of the state of emergency came as sigh of relief when the nation was passing through a grave crisis.

Truly speaking, we should not call the present govt. a caretaker government. The caretaker govt. had failed to address the problems that the nation was facing. The present govt. has been formed through promulgation of emergency to address the national crisis & has a greater role than that of a caretaker government. We therefore call this govt. an interim government.

Many quarters are suggesting that this government be in power for six months to two years. My suggestion is that to fulfil the tasks ahead, this govt. should remain in power for a period of not less than one year & not more than two years. At the end of the tenure they should hold an election on non-party basis. The elected MPs will adopt a new constitution. Party politics should be allowed after the tenure of five years of the non-party elected government is over.

This interim govt. should free politics from undesirable elements & create a platform for capable persons to be encouraged to join national politics & emerge as leaders who will eventually lead the country towards progress and prosperity.

TAM Nurul Basher
Dhaka

Well done!

I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the new caretaker government for taking some unexpected and hitherto unseen steps to eliminate some glaring anomalies of our society. I wish to cite in this regard some aspects of our daily life where some corrective measures can

mitigate the woes of the public and the community itself.

For instance a) No registration to bus, truck, car etc. should be given if the owners of such vehicles fail to produce enough evidence of adequate parking space. Collective measures can be undertaken by a group of people of adjacent areas to arrange, rent parking space. b) A complete prohibition should be imposed in regard to car parking around the intersections of busy thoroughfares, corners and roundabouts of the metropolitan cities. Alternate space can be chosen at the nearby surroundings avoiding direct parking on the sides of important public thoroughfares. c) A blanket ban should be imposed on wall writing etc. on public and private buildings. People interested in displaying opinions, expressions should be made to hire billboards to get their message across.

d) The authorities may consider introducing one-way traffic on some of the busiest roads. A comprehensive and integrated traffic network master plan should be thought out for a booming and bustling metropolis like Dhaka. These are only a very few titbits for a crisis and problem ridden country named Bangladesh. This country has suffered much due to misrule and inept governance since its birth. I am sure people are looking forward to this dedicated team of advisers to make a real difference.

Syed Shamim Hasan Faruk
Gulshan, Dhaka

Nomination 'business'

When somebody is buying a nomination with a huge amount of money, what will he do after getting elected as MP? Certainly, the nomination buyer will try to recover all the money along with some interest. Politics has become a business in Bangladesh.

The caretaker government should try to stop this nomination business once and for all by arresting its proponents in the two major parties.

Md Humayun Kadir
North Carolina, USA

with politics

"Rajnit", the craft of the kings or the king of all crafts has a complex status in the psyche of Bangladeshi people. In contrast to the situation in the USA, for example, where a bright and ambitious kid aspires to be the president, in Bangladesh the brilliant hardly ever aspire to join politics, but often remain happy with being a salaried professional, a state functionary or a businessman.

This lack of enthusiasm about politics might be due to our long history of colonialism when the education system, created by the imperialist rulers, wanted to show the politicians, repository of national aspiration, as vile creatures. Even after independence senior members of the bureaucracy were in the habit of making fun of the politicians often ridiculing their lack of intellect. Some of our most venerable and respected politicians were not spared this ridicule, often meted out privately by the very officers who were supposedly serving them.

The current attack on politicians, though based on clear evidence of improper behaviours, still runs the risk of dredging up the old stereotype, which is deeply rooted in our culture. The organised professional bodies, such as the civil service have often despised politicians and have tried to belittle or malign them. Politicians have not helped the situation either; they have remained as close as possible to the stereotype; a motley mess of spit-throwing bellicosity, intellectually questionable characters, without a coherent vision, who hardly ever spoke well, and wrote even worse.

So on the one hand we have a culture contemptuous of politicians, and as if to fit that scenario we have a whole bunch of people in politics who do not command respect or admiration due to their own assorted shortcomings.

How do we break this cycle? Maybe the entry of Prof. Yunus is a circuit breaker for this unacceptable situation. By breaking the stereotype of verbally stultified and intellectually challenged politicians we now have an articulate economist, a receiver of a big international prize, in fact the mother of all prizes. Let his entry into politics usher in an era where the brightest boys and girls of Bangladesh would aspire to join politics. Let our political parties offer political cadetship to the brightest of our young people and make them young party leaders not based on heredity or loyalty but on intellect.

Instead of being negative about the entry of Prof. Yunus into politics, our major political parties should open up their respective parties to innovation, intellect, and youth. Older leaders should step aside making way for younger colleagues

Selection of World Cup team

First of all, I want to request the cricket fans that whatever opinions we have about the team selection we should not go overboard with them and support the team that will represent the country. In the last few matches, our team dominated against the minnows of world cricket. Though this has bolstered the team's confidence I have serious doubts about the strength of the opposition and whether this has been an ideal preparation for the World Cup. It will be a test of character for the team to put aside the selection controversy and perform to the best of their ability in a pressure situation. The positive attribute is that the team is young and has the appetite for winning and even though it has the toughest draw in the group stage we know the team can cross the first round hurdle.

To the cricketers, I would like to say triumph or failure, our support will not sway, show the will to fight and sweep the demons away.

Yasin Ahmed
IBA, DU

I would urge the selectors of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to reconsider the omission of Khaled Mashud Pilot. Over the years, Mashud has been a great source of motivation for the team. He and Mohammed Rafiq are the only two

players left from our team in the mid-nineties. I believe that Mashud still has a lot of cricket left in him and he is the best keeper of the country.

It is a positive move for the selectors to think of preparing the younger keeper, but not at the expense of overall performance and

Wicket keeping is a specialized position for both one day-international (ODI) and Test cricket. Mr. Faruque knows it very well and that is why he

made it more specialised by introducing the concept of batsman-wicketkeeper and of wicketkeeper-batsman. Probably nobody thought it before he did!! But the point he missed is, at this moment the team needs a wicketkeeper-batsman not the other one. Faruque admits that Mashud is still the No.1 keeper of Bangladesh. And such a keeper can save at least 10 to 20 runs in each match which can make the difference. The second point is Mashud is of course better than Mushfiquir to hold the bat and can continue till the score gets some respectability when the top-order collapses, which is not a rare event for the Bangladesh team. He has proven it many times in the past.

Wicketkeeper-batsman is a necessity while a batsman-wicketkeeper is a bonus. For Bangladesh team it is time to fulfil the requirements first. It is not the time to take a chance and go for extra benefit. Mashud has the guts to stand behind the stumps and perform in events like the World Cup when the whole nation bet on those eleven players.

The World Cup is not a lab for experiment; it is the place for showing results.

Mohammad Farhan Alam
Queen Mary University of London, UK



experience of a stalwart cricketer. This is the World Cup we are taking about.

Mashur Rahman
Ohio University, USA

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Irrigation facilities

Extending irrigation facilities by making a network of water supply canals from a neighbouring water source is possible (rivers can help farmers to cultivate in dry seasons). This can be extremely helpful for a cultivator who cannot get water in dry seasons for cultivating rice, pulses, vegetables etc. Some areas are cultivated in dry season because of having nearby sources of water, but over 75% remain unutilised during the dry seasons, mainly due to non-availability of water. Initially, there can be one project in each thana where farmers have never had any scope to get water for cultivation in dry seasons. Prior to implementing such a project, land owners/farmers of that area have to be organised with the help of local administration and UP chairman to make sure that the landowners do not keep their land uncultivated within the areas covered by the project as soon as the facility is ready. This type of programme will hopefully open a great opportunity to the farmers to cultivate their land round the year.

Newaz Noor-ul Wahab
Housing Estate, Sylhet

