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State of our politics and new generation

I remember reading the stories of Salam, Barkat, Rafique, Jabbar during my school days; the stories of the seven Bir

Sreshtha, and how they sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country. They now seem to be stuff of fairy tales.

That day these brave souls fought for the right of the people to determine their own destiny against the elements that



wanted to keep this country in the grips of colonial rulers. Alas! It is the families of the two most inspirational figures of our liberation war that have committed the heinous act of banding together with these elements to acquire power. Did we really have democracy, or just rotating elected monarchy?

We cannot improve our lot until we bring our best and brightest into the mainstream. For too long the civil society of this country has been held hostage by the corrupt elements. Both the major political parties are equally responsible for it. Politics of destruction, blockades and strikes must end. Cadres aligned with the political parties must be dismantled. Why should the businesses and the people suffer because the politicians are too childish to settle their differences by the weight of their argument in the parliament?

Our best and brightest go overseas in search of opportunities. In the current political climate does anyone dare start an honest venture that they can pursue with any certainty? How will we be able to generate

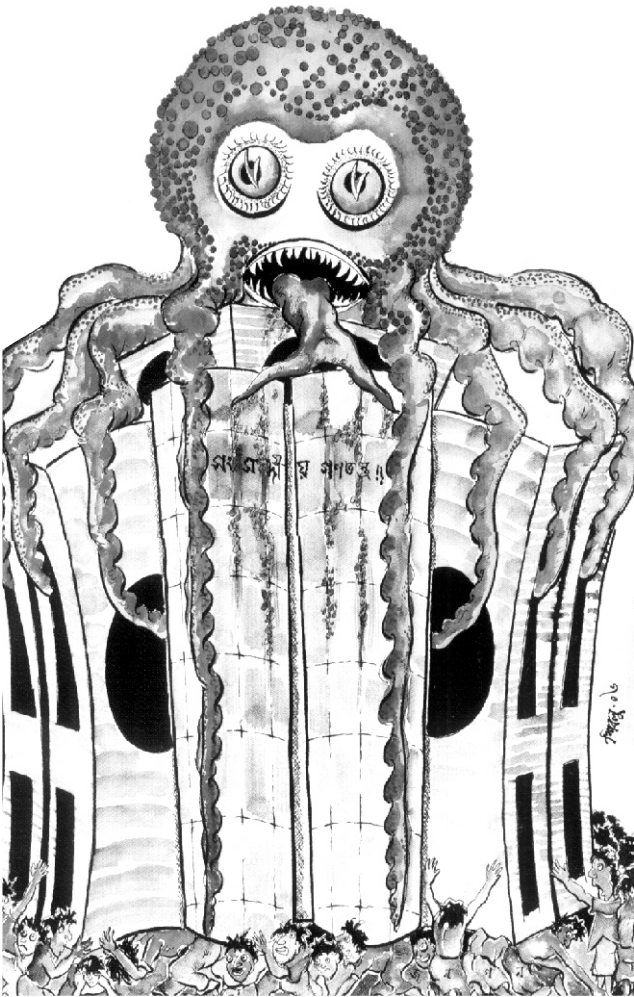
those opportunities for them? My father gave up on the country when he decided to settle abroad. I hope to come back and live among my people. I fear that if I cannot do that, I will not be able to keep this desire in my children.

I must also congratulate Prof Yunus for getting the Nobel Prize even working in this environment. This shows us what vision and determination can achieve. Maybe those of us that have taken the relatively easy route to settle overseas are also partly to blame for the state of our country.

I am very heartened to see the efforts of the caretaker government and the Anti Corruption Commission to address this situation. I sincerely hope this is the dawn of a new kind of politics one not designed to swell the pockets of a few.

Please do not let the sacrifices of the bravest sons of the land melt away into fairy tales.
Shoaib Ahmed
Wellington,
New Zealand

Election and corruption



The major political parties are pressing for early election. But democracy in the wrong hands could be worse than autocracy and dictatorship. Some of the elected functionaries of the past governments were the most corrupt individuals and nursed a culture of corruption, extortion and gross embezzlement of the national treasury of the poorest nation. I was appalled to learn that these corrupt politicians made law to import the luxurious automobiles for their personal use. They plundered the money of the poorest of the poor. Their leaders should take the responsibility and should be tried for the crime against humanity. At a time of utter disaster for the nation, God Almighty has sent some competent citizens to chart a decent course of honest and transparent governance system and bring the corrupt to justice. Instead of seeking forgiveness for nurturing the corrupt and incompetent ministers and political characters, how dare these leaders challenge the interim government and ask for early election.

The two major parties should kick out all the corrupt leaders from their folds.
M R Uddin
Tennessee, USA

Liberation War Museum

A few days ago, I went to visit our 'Muktijuddho Jadughar' (Liberation War Museum) located in a narrow lane in Shegunbagicha (as if in whole Bangladesh we had found no larger place than this tiny plot of land).

To improve the situation, the government should allocate funds in every year's budget to preserve the memories of Liberation War. Though our history is full of events, we are still unable to build a suitable museum to demonstrate those.

Md. Maidul Islam
Department of English
University of Dhaka

Deep seaport off Chittagong

The project for the deep seaport has not yet been taken up. For years, lack of efficiency has choked us at our ports.

I had an opportunity to meet with a senior Bengalee Indian friend here, who is now retired and

teaches MBA at our local University MSU, ex- chairman of a major port in the USA who has extensive marine engineering background in a port in India. This highly knowledgeable friend also thinks that the deep seaport is a great idea for us. We both understand that this will open up possibilities of more trade and jobs-- the entire neighbourhood including Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, parts of China will be benefited.

There is no need to fear all the bad wolves, we live in their neighbourhood and no one is going to fool us. We should get it checked quickly by our own legal experts and have regular oversights as we go along.

There may be many opinions on the issue. It is like taking a cold shower in the winter. We have to make difficult choices, and get with it or we may slumber for some more years.

I am glad this is on its way from what I read, or our trade will suffer and our unemployment rate will remain very high or worsen further. Bangladesh is too small geographically, to worry about localism /

provincialism / parochialism. Chittagong is the best location with the existing infrastructure already in place.

Md Mahmood Hasan Choudhury
Springfield, Missouri, USA

World Bank operations

Through the recent months, it is increasingly becoming clear from analyzing media presentations, both print and electronic that the bank (World Bank) has been losing incrementally its aggressive culture of support and follow-up when it comes to, for example, bank assisted national programmes and projects in Bangladesh. During the time of the bank's immediate past country director, we, the ordinary citizens of Bangladesh, somehow felt either directly or otherwise and as appropriate - the pulse of say, bank's initiatives, as well as activities in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Our present day experience is, however, a bit different from the one described above.

The motive behind the bank's present day pace of operations in Bangladesh is unknown. But it is understandable: a change of leadership can, among other things, become instrumental in bringing about changes in areas such as: operations philosophy; and outcome production methodologies; under certain circumstances. We hope that will be the case and the period of transition would soon be over. We would like to see the bank more active and more outcome-oriented, among other things.

It is expected the bank will let Bangladeshis and others know, in a more meaningful and result-oriented fashion, its activities, problems, prospects and successes (particularly, those relating to public interest) on a continuous basis - in pursuit of say, strengthening, as well as sustaining further, people-bank synergies. The bank cannot and should not ignore its accountability (in pertinent areas) to the people.

It is also expected the bank will double its effort towards devolution of its programme in Bangladesh at a faster rate and in a more sustainable manner.

We are confident the bank will, under the able leadership of its president, be able to facilitate changes for the better in above and other related areas.
Dr. M. S. Haq
Dhaka

To Dr. Yunus...

It was a great honour for a country like us to have you as a citizen. We are proud to say that by getting the Noble Peace Prize you glorified our national image in the eyes of the entire world.

With high hopes and admiration, we from abroad would like to extend our support to your intention to run the country as an elected leader of the people.

Our country is known as the poorest in the world, we feel no shame for that but it caught spotlight when it was identified as the most corrupt country in the world for the last few years. Our politicians and government officials do not care for any consequences of their corruption and evil minds because they know that there is none to bring them to justice.

But the situation has changed. Now we can look forward to a better future.
Mohammad Mamun

Florida, USA

NGO's and Emergency

As a regular reader of your paper my attention was drawn to a news item on page 15 of your Thursday March 15, 2007 issue captioned "NGOs for emergency until reforms are done" quoting UNB, Dhaka. I wish to state that while supporting the effort towards rooting out corruption, all of us may not be in favour of extending the period of emergency, nor all the methods being used at present, especially at the grassroots level, in the name of anti-corruption drive, where some persons who have been arrested in different parts of the country are not perceived locally as being corrupt.

The statement as published reflects the view of the individual interviewed and does not necessarily cover the opinion of NGOs as a whole. The heading is therefore misleading.
Khushi Kabir
Coordinator
Nijera Kori, Dhaka

Democracy within the parties

Both the BNP and the AL are eager to have election as early as possible to uphold democracy, and it is clear to the people of the republic that the democracy these parties want to have is no good for us!

Why do both the BNP and the AL have family members as leaders of the parties? Are they capable and competent descendants of the founders of the parties?

Remove these incompetent scions from leadership and implement democracy within the party first.

Nazmul Ahsan
On e-mail

Application of law

The president has declared a state of emergency. As the emergency law states, during the period of emergency all kinds of political meetings, discussions, processions are banned. And going by the law, thousands of ponds should take a

month or two and consequently our country would gain a lot through such fruitful undertakings.
Golam Ashraf
Gulshan, Dhaka

Your commentary

I read your commentary (9.3.07) with curiosity and found it distressing not so much for the content, but for the timing. Now that Tarique Rahman has been arrested, it is safe to be critical of his past activities. I think everyone shares your views about the ignominious past of Tarique Rahman but what is more troubling to me is that these were not disclosed by the press when he was running the show.

It was common knowledge that Tarique Rahman used his mother's power in government and the BNP to build an empire of corruption, but those who condoned it or benefited from it must take responsibility as well. The press must collectively admit its guilt of not exposing these despicable acts when the time was ripe. It is time they all looked in the mirror and ask themselves what their responsibilities were.

I had deep respect for people who struggled for free press. But is this free press, is this responsible press?
Manzur Khan
On e-mail

I have thoroughly enjoyed your commentary (9.3.07) on 'Prince of corruption' and analysis of how a 'political party turned into a family property'.

You are very much right that Tarique is not the only one to be blamed as his mother failed to pay attention to his acts; so she should be responsible as well.
Shagana Chowdhury
A reader

Dreaming of a corruption free society
It is for people like Tarique Zia and the rest of his accomplices that the country is in its present condition. I

Gas supply at Baunia Bandh
The government allotted 2,600 plots in Baunia Bandh 17 years ago. There are all urban amenities like water-supply, electricity in our locality. But it's a matter of regret that there is no gas-supply in the area. There is no alternative way of cooking without using heaters which consume a lot of electricity. In spite of being a favourable location for gas-supply, this problem is not being solved for lack of government effort. And we are the victims.

We, therefore, would like to draw the attention of the government to this matter. Why should the area be left out of the gas-supply scheme?
Md. Jahidul Islam
Baunia Bandh
Mirpur, Dhaka

Seasonal work

In Bangladesh, we have six seasons, each comprising two Bangla calendar months. The winter approaches us with two opportunities, first the season of festivals known as melas (fairs) and pithas (cakes) and second, excavation and re-excavation of new and old ponds across the country. The Union Parishads (local bodies) and the elected public officials and the well-to-do citizens should engage in excavation and re-excavation of ponds, at least one pond every year in every union.

Excavation and re-excavation of thousands of ponds should take a

came to the US thinking I'd move back home once I was done with college and use my knowledge and experience to do good for the country. But as the years went by and I kept hearing and reading about how these people were sucking all our resources dry, I realized I wouldn't be able to survive in a place where money was the only language the service sector and government officials understood.

It's not like I wasn't aware of the level of corruption before I left. I still remember how my driver had to bribe an official at the BRTA to sign the inspection certificate of a brand new car. That official wouldn't even hear a word or look at us unless we dished out Tk 3,000. And this was for a car that just rolled out of the showroom. Imagine how others are having to pay these officials daily to get the simplest and easiest of works done. We're probably as guilty as he was because it is engraved in our mind that it is the normal procedure to follow in order to get things done here.

Finally, someone has taken a step in the right direction and they're likely to face a lot of hurdles that they have to overcome but if they can pull this off there will be many others like me who will be homebound soon. It is childish of me to think that we can somehow banish Khaleida Zia and Sheikh Hasina from Bangladesh for good and start afresh, but I promise to whoever's listening that if corruption is rooted out from its core, you will see a lot of the educated children of Bangladesh coming back to work for their nation. The intellectual migration that we have noticed for decades now might turn with the tide. Hats off to the caretaker government for finally showing some resolution.

Signing off with the hope of one day making it back to a country free of corruption and not in the list of Transparency International.
Sabik Enayet
On e-mail

Support for

Yunus

I strongly support Dr. Yunus' coming to politics. During the regimes of the BNP and the Awami League the political situation of Bangladesh deteriorated drastically. These two parties were destroying our beautiful country through corruption. Most of the politicians of these two parties are dishonest and the parties have no innovative ideas in their politics. The people of Bangladesh are upset by the activities of these two parties. Now, the caretaker government is running the country successfully.

So, there is a great possibility of Dr. Yunus emerging as the national leader.

Syed Ali
Flushing, NY

Twice is enough

The caretaker government should make a law that one person can never be prime minister or president more than twice. That will ensure change of leadership in the major parties. I think the BNP and the AL should not belong to just two families. There should be internal democracy in those parties.

Finally, the caretaker govt. should not hurry to hold election. Even if it needs 2/3 years to fight corruption, it should continue.

Jafrul Hassan
President, FarEast Co. Ltd
Tokyo, Japan

Doctor's malady!



Your correspondent's report (DS:Mar,4) on the subject depicts a cruel type of corruption practised by a doctor at the DMCH. These cases for the ACC and the CTG to seriously investigate. The BMA should also investigate the matter and take strong punitive action against the people concerned, and set an example against such type of immoral acts taking advantage of a poor patient's helplessness. I hope the matter is not glossed over on the excuse that the affected patient has made no written complaint, because possibly she cannot do so for lack of education and some other reasons.

It is much worse than taking bribe for doing a favour, or helping someone.

The readers are waiting for further reports in your daily on this issue.

S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka



THE TOP TEN EVENTS

There are so many events in our history that make indelible marks on our memory. I am sure there will be disagreements about the order that I am listing my "Top Ten". Or you might come up with a few different events that will make your "Top Ten". I still think it is nice to go back and get inspired from the great events and learn from the mistakes. In my humble opinion, here are the top ten remarkable events in our history:

- 1) The historic speech by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 7 March 1971.
- 2) 16 December 1971.
- 3) 26 March 1971.
- 4) The murder of the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, on August 15, 1975.
- 5) The assassination of Ziaur Rahman in Chittagong Circuit House.
- 6) The arrest of Tarique Rahman very recently.
- 7) Dr. Yunus winning the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 8) The historic win by Bangladesh against Pakistan in the Cricket World Cup in England.
- 9) The remarkable win against World Cup champions Australia in a limited over cricket tournament in England.
- 10) The present caretaker government doing such a remarkable job since taking over.

Do you agree?

Tariq Matin, Potomac, Maryland, USA