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The fall of US



GEE, THANKS,
MR. PRESIDENT
FOR LIBERATING US

Following the failed US-led "war on terror" in the Middle East and its negative impact on the world at large, the US drew negative rating in a poll conducted recently by the British Broadcasting Corp.'s World Service which asked more than 28,000 people to rate 12 countries Britain, Canada, China, France, India, Iran, Israel, Japan, North Korea, Russia, the United States and Venezuela as having a positive or negative influence on the world.

President Bush and his neo-con cohorts, however, can still rejoice at the fact that the United States is not the top most in the hit list, but it follows Israel and Iran in that order as the countries with the most negative image in a globe-spanning survey of attitudes toward 12 major nations. According to the survey, Canada and Japan came out the best. Canada had the most positive rating in the survey, with 54 percent viewing it positively and 14 percent negatively. Israel was viewed negatively by 56 percent of respondents and positively by 17 percent; for Iran, the figures were 54 percent and 18 percent.

The United States had the third-highest negative ranking, with 51 percent citing it as a bad influence and 30 percent as a good one. Next was North Korea, which was viewed negatively by 48 percent and positively by 19 percent. The message is loud and clear: the US has lost its world leader status and unless it reverses its foreign policy goals and approaches, the country would find it difficult to stay as the superpower in a world which is increasingly coming back under the influence of Russia and China.

Dr. Abdul Ruff Colachal
JNU, New Delhi

North Korea's next leader

A big inscrutability about North Korea is -- who will be the next leader of the country? There are just about as many speculations as there are political observers of this sealed and secretive country.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea was founded on September 9, 1948. Around that time, it was only one among many other communist states around the world, including the USSR, People's Republic of China and several countries in Eastern Europe. Sixty years later, North Korea stands as the last remaining stronghold of the socialist ideologies, when other communist states either rejected revolutionary orientation or simply ceased to exist. As China and Vietnam have already moved towards market orientation with controlled democracy, North Korea is said to be the last Stalinist, hard-line communist state in Asia.

It is simplistic to look at the country's power structure in terms of dynastic tendencies. The North Koreans themselves loathe the use of the word 'dynasty'; but if it is not a dynasty, it is at least very powerful kinfolk, and it is tough to suppose that Kim Jong's



No more flyovers!

The letter on March 12 by Dr. QMM Zaman has some significance in the context of our country.

Ironically, in Bangladesh where there are no good roads, no transport system, no traffic system, no roadworthy vehicles, what is the importance of a flyover? During my recent visit, I saw that the flyovers are used for entirely different purposes by young men and women. I support Dr. Zaman who has my sympathy but we have to wait for the opportunity to come.

I would refrain from making any political points, but in due course of time, when the dust settles, Bangladesh should have an integrated transport system, interconnecting the strategic points of the railways, waterways, air terminals and the roads to make possible the smooth movement of people, goods and other services.

MA Gafur Howlader
Woodstock Avenue, London

Is it possible?

Reading the news of the arrest of Mr. Tarique Rahman, son of a former prime minister, we were surprised. Is it possible in Bangladesh? Yes, indeed! Now everything is possible in Bangladesh. A few months ago, Mr. Rahman was a very powerful figure in our politics, though he was not holding any position in the government. No one thought that he could be arrested.

The government's steps to eradicate corruption from the country have been welcomed by the people. They support all such efforts.

M. Rahman
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Do we need a political government?

Political government has been proved to be an ineffective system for Bangladesh. Since this country was born no political party in power could demonstrate its sincere will and ability for the welfare of this country. Instead, they were busy making their fortune while giving fake impression of patriotism in public. I think our countrymen have enough reasons to lose faith in all the political parties under consideration.

On the other hand, the current CTG is doing a fabulous job in its drive against corruption and also in many key decisions for economic development of the country. I salute the government as a citizen of this country and would like to ask a question, "Can we consider any other form of government apart from the so called democratic political government?"

Zahedul Islam
On e-mail

Caretaker government

The present caretaker government led by Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed is by no means a perfect government and free of flaws. However, this team of people is by far the most dedicated team which is really making a difference in Bangladesh.

We all know that no positive change can be sustained unless this government can stay in power for some time. But what is that time period?

Given that Bangladesh is a democratic country, election will have to be called sometime or other and then what? The solution may lie in calling for a referendum and let

the people of the land decide if they want this caretaker government to stay for the next four years and really clean up the country (with a clear-cut agenda and timeframe) so that no one in the next 25 years even dares to think of corrupt ways and working with impunity. Let this cancer be eradicated once and for all.

If you do agree, please pass on this message to all the people you know, via email, fax, telephone, media etc. This may be our last chance to make a difference for our country in a legitimate way. Show your support and let us all be part of this "Silent revolution by the people."

Let us have a referendum and let the people decide.

Waseem Ahmed
On e-mail

Right at this moment the whole Bangladesh is praying for the longevity of the caretaker govt. Because they are taking bold steps to build the golden foundation on which people will build the country of dream.

So this golden opportunity should not be spoiled by any time limit.

Syed Forhad Hussain
On e-mail

After a long time the people of Bangladesh have been blessed by the Almighty and have been given the caretaker government under the leadership of Mr. Fakhruddin Ahmed who is doing a very good job of getting rid of corruption at all levels without any discrimination. This is an opportunity which should not be missed. The people of Bangladesh have suffered since independence, first under the Awami league government which thought Bangladesh was their personal property to be ruled by the Awami League and then under the corrupt BNP government and Ershad's corrupt regime. So please do not let the people of Bangladesh suffer any more, we have had enough of democracy.

Let the caretaker government run Bangladesh For the next 10 (TEN)

years. It is the people's demand that we do not want any election for another TEN years. If required the caretaker government should include more honest and capable Advisers by passing a law to make it easier to run the government.

No more slogans!
Shaheen Karim
On e-mail

Good article

It has been a long time since I read such a nice piece -- "The rise and fall of Tarique Rahman". I know how tough it is to write something like this without fearing the reprisals that may follow.

Reading a piece that depicts the latest developments in politics is quite enlightening.

I heartily congratulate Mr. Zafar Sobhan.
Rubaiyat Kibria
University of Sydney, Australia

Why not "Gono Shakti" ?

The naming of Dr. Yunus' political party troubled me but I was not surprised. If one pays a little attention to the meanings of the word "Nagorik" and "Gono", the striking difference will be apparent. The word "Nagorik" means "Citizen". This "Citizen" is not the city dweller but the citizen of the state. The state assigns or bestows the rights and privileges to people. The identity of a citizen is subordinate to the state.

In contrast, "Gono" means "People". People belong to humanity. They are a free and sovereign entity. The people's rights are universal and they get their rights from their mere existence. History shows us that people rise up and fight when their rights are violated. Very recent examples of such people's uprising or movement against injustice are Kansat, Fulbari and Shonir Akhra.

Is Dr. Yunus not at ease with the word "Gono"?
Mushtahid Ahmed
Massachusetts, USA

Voter ID in the

The Caribbean carnival

Eight out of the 16 competing nations have a realistic chance of winning the world's biggest cricket tournament. After the recent losses of current world champions Australia -- England beating them in the tri-nation finals in Australia and New Zealand hammering them 3-0 in NZ - the other good teams now know that the one and a half month long tournament is wide open. The last two World Cups in England and South Africa were dominated by Australia.

Although the Aussies remain the pre-tournament favourites of this year's competition, the odds have been slashed of late after South Africa topped them as the number one team in ODI cricket.

The fact that this year's World Cup is being held in West Indies, winners of the first two World Cup tournaments, is historic in itself. The Caribbeans are holding their first ever World Cup. Passion and atmosphere are guaranteed when it comes to the West Indies.

It will be foolish to write off the Aussies, albeit they have lost five games in a row recently, as they always rise up to occasions such as the World Cup. However, injuries to Brett Lee, arguably the best bowler in ODI cricket, and a lack of a quality spinner is definitely a big setback for them. West Indian pitches are very unpredictable but generally the slow

nature of the pitch suits spinners. Sri Lanka, the 1996 champions, are the team to look out for in this year's World Cup and I expect them to go all the way and win the whole thing. In M Muralitharan, they have the world's best spinner and they have some very good spinning all-rounders as well, who are going to be a huge

asset in the West Indian pitches. The relatively small grounds in the Caribbean will also help the likes of Jayasuriya, Sangakkara and co. West Indies also have a decent chance of being the first host to win the World Cup. Their main worry is their inexperienced bowling attack and their terrible inconsistency. Pakistan can thrash any side on their day, but like the West Indies, are also very inconsistent.

England, after their heroics in Australia are also a threat and if Andrew Flintoff, Kevin Pietersen and Paul Collingwood are playing well they have a chance of being the first English team to win the competition. India, runners-up in the last World Cup, have more than a decent team to win the World Cup, but they are most probably going to face the Aussies in the Super Eight stage of the competition, and will find it extremely tough to progress from that stage. South Africa always "choke" at big competitions and is possibly the worst Test playing nation, if judged by possessing quality spinners and I think they will have a poor World Cup. New Zealand are a very professional outfit and they are capable of, at least, progressing to the semi-final stage. Bangladesh, under coach Dav Whatmore, are a team to look out for after their recent successes against Zimbabwe, Kenya and Scotland and beating the Kiwis in a warm-up game. The boys will definitely fight very well!

Aranya Syed
University of London, UK



wrong hands

I have been reading different opinions on voter ID cards and its completion time frame-- one year. I'm very sorry to pass a comment -- who are the experts and what is their experience in this field to declare confidently that this massive job can be done within a year? My humble suggestions to the Chief Adviser-- please do not make the mistake of just listening to the experts actually having no expertise on the subject matter. In Bangladesh it is very easy to become an expert and that is why our most controversial project like MRP and National ID card have just collapsed in the hands of non-experts with no expertise on the subject matter. Consultant-turned-businessman! Caution!!! Please do not buy wholesale ideas from non-experts.

The government is thinking in terms of introducing finger print, do we have all the resources or expertise to cross check the finger prints, or is it just an idea thrown by some of the non-experts? Our ID card should be very simple with a photo and some security features which make sense and it is possible to do it. Otherwise, this will be another failure and people will not excuse you for any mistakes. Once the

project is done than you can introduce finger print, biometric (Even the UK and the USA could not go up to that level of ID technology) and all other luxury security features.

We have to remember that a layman cannot fly an aircraft.

Razzaque
Shaftesbury-UK

Why this change?

The new caretaker government has now become a toast of the common people (who are not involved in any criminal activities) for taking unprecedented steps to remove the blatant anomalies from society. I would like to put forward a suggestion to the CA.

About 15 years ago when I went to a cinema hall along with my mother, I noticed that before starting any movie, the cinema authorities showed our national flag and played the national anthem and the audience used to show due respect to the flag. But now the situation has changed. The cinema authorities show the flag and play the national anthem but the viewers don't feel it necessary to show respect to them.

The government should, I feel, take steps to create awareness among the viewers through the hall owners and managers.

Ariful Islam Mithu
Ishwardi, Pabna

Directorate of Environment

Whenever we talk about corruption we blame police, customs, income tax, Wasa, electric department, City Corporation etc. Apart from these there are a few departments which we think are very clean and fair. Recently, we came across one of such departments known as the Directorate of Environment. Although the main activity of this directorate is to present a clean and pollution free environment, in reality it is a far cry, at least in Dhaka city. The Directorate inspectors are supposed to take action against all anti-environmental activities, but they have failed miserably to contain pollution.

A. M. Zakaria, Mirpur-2

GLOBAL WARMING



This is indeed a great long-term ambitious plan of Europe to reduce emissions by 20% by 2020, although it remains to be seen how good an example Europe will set. The EU leaders have set various action plans to achieve their target in the next 13 years. It seems that it's not only an agreement among European states but also an example to be followed by every nation. As a nation of nearly 150 million people, we do have a lot to do to combat global warming.

Global warming is the most serious threat to the world and big economic powers like the USA, China, Japan, India etc. are more responsible for it than other nations as they together create more pollution than the rest of the world. But, unfortunately, the leaders of these countries have not given appropriate importance and priority to this serious issue in their agenda. For example, the USA has not yet signed the Kyoto Protocol. President Bush clearly said that it would have massive impact on their economy if they sign the Protocol. It's not my intention here to assess how the USA will be benefited economically by not joining with other countries to combat global warming. But this is recognised by every scientist that disasters like Katrina are the result of global warming. It happens due to an unexpected temperature increase in the deep Atlantic Ocean. Natural disasters like Katrina cause deaths of thousands.

We are not safe at all! One third of Bangladesh will be under the Bay of Bengal, which includes some coastal districts of Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions. Temperature will increase from 1 to 7 degree centigrade. So, the highest temperature will likely be nearly 50 degree centigrade during summer.

We are already late to understand this serious threat which is much more serious than any other threat such as epidemic or terrorism. As a nation, we need to prepare our own action plan and a combined action plan in Saarc to reduce pollution as soon as possible. Individuals like you and me also should reduce pollution by saving energy in our everyday life.

This is the time for the new generation to understand this problem, which is not that far away. The governments needs to include issues like environment pollution and global warming in the high school textbooks to make this generation aware of the upcoming dangers.

Faruk Ahmed
Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand