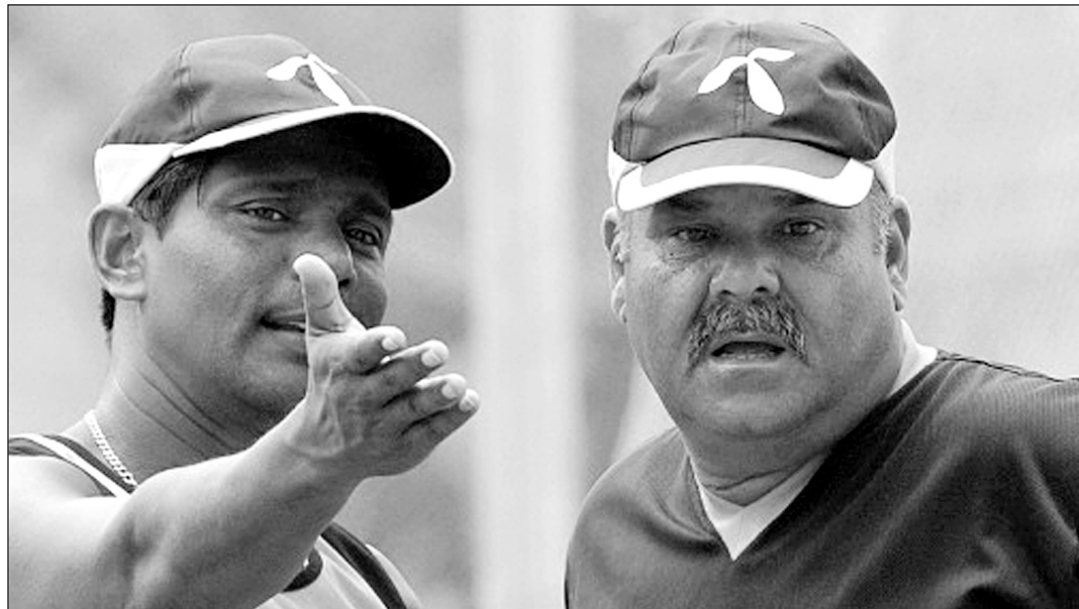


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



doing what is expected of it. It's making some determined efforts to root out corruption.
A Citizen
Chittagong

Relations with Afghanistan

Afghanistan has now become a land of business. After the fall of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan opened its door to the international community. We can capitalize on this situation. But regrettably we don't have an embassy there.

Hopefully, our present caretaker government will take some steps to build up a bilateral relation with Afghanistan.

Neyamul Hasan
Kalabagan, Dhaka

Article 63

I would like to draw your attention to the article 63 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. It says-" 63. War (1) War shall not be declared and the Republic shall not participate in any war except with the assent of Parliament." So what happens when there is no Parliament?

I want a scholarly article on the issue in your newspaper.

Areader
One-mail

Comments

I wholeheartedly agree with Zafar Sobhan's Straight Talk "This isn't 1990" in DS May 11, 2007. Sheikh Hasina has scored 10 out of 10 in her latest standoff against the overzealous move of the interim government to exile her and equate with her archrival Khaleda Zia. Since Abdul Jalil's April fool, the so-called deadline, in 2004, the AL has largely lost its credibility. That is why it was unable to organise any strong protest after the assassination of SAMS Kibria and the attempt on Hasina's life. It also lost credibility due to calling frequent hartals and the October massacre in Paltan.

The AL has regained the credibility with Sheikh Hasina's bold move against the exile plan and her stand against exiling her archrival. However, there is difference between being bold and being foolish. Any stand against any wrong move by the government will be bold and the AL has a good chance to score some points. On the other hand, considering this government as an adversary will be foolish and the AL might lose some credibility. However, joining hands with the BNP will be ill-advised and will lead the party to bankruptcy. This is not 1990; forming alliance with the BNP now will be forming alliance with Ershad.

Before joining the alliance, the AL should think of what the BNP has done to try the killers of Sheikh Mujib, Ahsanullah Master, SAMS Kibria, Ivry Rahman, etc.

Looking ahead, the AL should push for complete reforms in politics.

Zakaria Khondker
Boston, USA

Doctor's insensitivity

I am deeply moved by an incident in a city hospital. I barely could check my tears having read about the brutality of the doctors and staff of that hospital. But it is nothing new, rather it is a perennial problem. Actually we the people have fallen victim to the doctors' insatiable greed. They seem to be immune from law. Even our journalists are afraid to highlight their ghastly practices. Or else, how doctors could take to the street or go for strike during the emergency? No newspaper has dared to run a story on how doctors have been earning money by keeping us hostage. Doctors are capable of rendering any middle class or lower middle class family destitute.

What is saddening is that, not a single doctor's name has featured in the list of the top corrupt persons of the present anti-corruption drive. But any investigative journalism could easily unearth bone chilling stories of how the patients

Hope fading away

The unfortunate people of this nation saw a ray of light when the CTG of Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed took over state power on 11 January 2007. People overwhelmingly welcomed the change and thought it to be a divine blessing. At the beginning, this new CTG took some steps with unprecedented firmness. Things were moving fast in the right direction and general people were thinking that something really would take place this time around. But in only about 120 days' time people now see that the light at the end of the tunnel is fading away and they will probably be in the same darkness as before.

The current situation has been explained in a post-editorial titled "Risk Assessment" by Mr. Zafar Sobhan. He has very rightly pointed out a few important aspects of the present CTG that majority people are really pondering. We can have a quick look at the government's progress report.

Its firm oath to eradicate corruption has been given a question mark by the rumour that the government may even let Tarique Rahman to go outside the country on the plea of medical treatment. So far, mainly political big fish have been targeted although everyone knows that the whole government system (bureaucracy, police, customs, tax officials, health & education sectors) is corrupt from top to bottom.

Separation of the judiciary from the executive has not been done although news was ripe that it would be done within weeks.

Virtually all steps/mis-steps surrounding the "minus two" plan gave a very bad impression about government's intention. This has been only successful in garnering further sympathy for the two ladies.

Demolition of illegal structures, slum eviction, removal of hawkers markets etc. have stopped at the half way stage.

The CTG has been unable to show any success in bringing down the prices of essential commodities.

The most important and talked about thing is that no one knows who is making what decisions and on what ground and reasoning. The newspapers are reporting that the CTG is army-backed. But the people do not know under what arrangement and agreement the system is working as the situation is opaque because of the prevailing emergency rule.

But there is no doubt that the whole nation is backing this government and is ready to give necessary time to bring effective and sustained changes in all crucial government sectors, especially the EC and ACC, so that these two institutions can successfully present the nation an elected parliament and a government of HONEST people.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna

are counting money in the name for pathological or radiological tests, which could have been easily saved had the doctors been little humane.

Let me give you one clue, if a diagnostic test costs you say Tk 1,000, the doctor invariably gets between Tk 400 to 600, which is either paid on a daily or a monthly basis. All the diagnostic centres, clinics and hospitals maintain a database or roster to see which doctor has sent how many references and pay them accordingly. Even peripheral doctors referring from Barisal or Mymensingh are not deprived. So having paid the doctors almost half the charge of a test, the institute is put in a bizarre situation of making a balance between test or no test. If they carry out a proper test that they would barely survive. So there remains every possibility of a fake test, given the present malpractice of the doctors. The end sufferers are the patients. But if strict measures could have been enforced against taking commissions from the diagnostic centres, clinics or hospitals, patients would be able to conduct a proper test at a much cheaper rate.

One last point, why the patients should pay the doctors twice, once for appointment and once for test? Who will answer this question and if not now when?

G.M. Chowdhury
Kafur, Dhaka

Foreign investment

The present caretaker government is going to deal with some big investments. Investment is good, if both sides get benefit from it. But it is very clearly written in the constitution that the caretaker government has no right to deal or sign any international business agreement with others, except on a

poll-related issue. We are sure Tata investment, gas pipeline, transit issue etc have no relation with free and fair election. But many foreign countries are pressing us for those deals.

It is not good. They should understand that this government cannot undertake such projects. If they could wait for 5 years, then why can't they wait for another 18 months? At present, Bangladesh is passing through a transitional period. They should understand it.

Transit, gas pipeline, Tata investment are big issues for Bangladesh. Our political government will discuss those issues in parliament. Then they will evaluate how much benefit we will get from those deals. It is our misfortune that no political party discussed those issues in parliament in the past. They overlooked those issues for cheap political reasons.

Sumon Dutta
One-mail

Bashar fails

Habibul Bashar's stubbornness in hanging around the team while making zero contribution is really intolerable. In the last two matches his captaincy and complete lack of ability as a batsman was holding back the rest of the team. The guy is nothing more than a passenger who is hanging around, despite having outlived his usefulness years ago at least in one-day cricket. Bangladesh needs someone who will lead from the front. How about that eternal fighter Rafique, even as a short term solution? It was unbelievable how defensive and negative Bashar was as a captain against this young Indian team.

As for his batting in the last year or so, the less said the better.

Shejuti Khan
Dallas, Texas

Next cricket coach

After two magnificent victories in the World Cup, we are looking for a new coach for our cricket team. At the moment, some names are being heard. All of them are quite high profile coaches.

The success of a cricket match comes from the efforts made by the whole team. This is why, the

responsibility of the captain and the coach of the team is great. A good coach is needed not only to teach the game-techniques, but he also has a role in making the team a fighting unit.

Considering the above-mentioned points, it is necessary to select a coach who understands our team per-

fectly. At this moment, the former New Zealand captain John Wright is the most suitable coach due to the following reasons.

Now we need a coach who emphasises batting since our batting line-up is not so strong. We could not yet set good openers for the World Cup 2007, Wright commented and assessed our players indi-

vidually, which were proved true.

Considering all these points, we should think about John Wright as our next coach. We have no way to look back.

Dr Kamrul Kibria
Department of Surgery
Mitford Hospital
Dhaka

Water crisis

Since day before yesterday, there is no water in Tejgunipara. Today is the third day into the crisis, and nobody has anything to do about it- the authorities gave no warnings, are giving no explanations, and neither any estimation of how long such conditions will persist. Throughout yesterday and today I witnessed people carrying kolshi, buckets, and containers commuting to get water from other places. I woke up early hearing my neighbours shouting in desperation for water. Apparently, the whole of Tejgunipara is submerged in a crisis.

The authorities must remember that people are passing through a crisis, and any such crisis is capable of driving the human mind to extremes. Instead of basking in illusions of their good deeds, the government must work to solve this problem.

Nabila Rafique
Final year LLB
University of London

General's comments

The other day our army chief in an informal conversation with the editor of a daily and the journalist from a radio channel reportedly told that the army would in no way grab state power. Now they are only helping the present caretaker administration to carry out the long needed reforms and would go back to the barracks after finishing the necessary tasks. His statement was lauded widely by the politicians. But when this same army chief in a seminar suggested tailoring the democracy in a way which would suit our own socio-economic conditions, it was severely criticised by these same politicians and some commentators. They did not accept it as a mere intellectual exercise which was given in a political science seminar where various views were supposed to be expressed.

Now it could be pointed out that it is not the task of the army chief to propagate the lessons of democracy. But my view is, it is an undeniable fact that the army is playing a very important role and their

credibility is largely enhanced because of their coming forward at this critical moment to save us from possible ruin and not to usurp state power but to transfer it to a civil administration within the constitutional framework.

In the circumstances, if the army chief who has shown great maturity and prudence expresses his views and provokes us to think critically, then what's wrong in it?

Rigan Chowdhury
Dhaka University

Private sector power generation

It is time to let the private sector, foreign or local, to invest in Bangladesh's energy sector to fulfill market demands for gas and electricity. Undeniably, private enterprises would be more efficient, with their expertise and resources, in supplying uninterrupted gas or coal for our power. Gas reserves could be higher, and utilisation more efficient, if private producers were discovering, conserving, and supplying gas to our kitchens, and to fertiliser or power plants.

In a free market in energy, prospective private investors in Bangladesh, after signing up with the administration, would be free to negotiate with people on whose land they want to drill or excavate. For a successful outcome, as in any business, there will be negotiations with people in relevant areas for corporate shares, jobs, or a premium price for the use or purchase of their lands. Presently, government owned or authorised operators simply evict people, and often coercively. The inhabitants of the area do not benefit from the wealth underneath their lands, which is unjust, exploitative, and a denial of their economic rights. To meet the energy needs of 150 million people, Bangladesh must boldly chalk out a programme that welcomes private entrepreneurs, the unfailing engines of development, with their right to produce power without government intervention.

Nizam Ahmad
Director, Liberal/Bangla, UK

Replacing the



Better days ahead?

We, the demoralised Bangladeshis, witnessed three almost miraculous happenings lately:

- Nobel Peace Prize for a Bangladeshi, Professor Yunus.
- Installation of an efficient caretaker government.
- An inspired and spirited Bangladesh team beating India

in World Cup cricket.

After seeing all the bad things that happened in our country due to the mismanagement of our past governments, we believe that our bad days are over and Bangladeshis can now expect the end of this wretched life and drudgery.

N.G. Chaudhury
Luxembourg

leadership

In a round table discussion arranged by The daily Prothom Alo, Major General (Rtd.) Ibrahim expressed his views that Sheikh Hasina & Khaleda Zia took the leadership of their respective parties when the parties were orphan but now both the parties are mature enough. So both of them should give up their leadership. My question is, who will decide who should lead the Awami League & the BNP? Is it the caretaker govt. or the party itself? Certainly the party itself -the members of the party-leaders of the party-the council members of the party. Does anyone within the Awami League support any other person except Sheikh Hasina as head of the party? Same is the case with the BNP.

So what is the point of putting forward suggestions on the issue that only party leaders and activists should deal with?

Azad Qayum
Los Angeles, California

Antagonism carried too far!

A picture has recently been published in most of the daily newspapers showing the national leaders of two major parties seated together inside a prison van. It made me think that had the situation during their regimes been congenial and had they been on talking terms among themselves and the leaders of the two parties could sit together, even during the crisis, the picture of the country and democracy would have been different.

Would our national leaders get the lesson from it? God knows.

Aneeka Rahman
Khulna

Corruption and punishment

While it is praiseworthy to see the crackdown on corruption, I do not believe sending identified corrupt and guilty people abroad will solve the problem. The corrupt and guilty must face justice at home.

A case in point was the news of sending Arafat Rahman and Tarique Rahman abroad along with their mother.

If anybody is proved to be guilty of amassing huge fortune by illegal means and by plundering national resources, he should be given exemplary punishment so that this kind of abuse of power does not happen in the future.

Once abroad, what is the guarantee that they will not try to come back to power again?

M. Faruque
USA

Hill people in trouble

The Garo Hills of Mymensingh are well known. Though these are called "Garo Hills", most of the people living here are not indigenous.

Now they are facing many problems, like natural calamities and rogue elephants.

The authorities concerned should look into the matter.

Md. Iqbal Hossin Millat
Sherpur

Dr. Yunus' decision

This is in reference with the report published in different newspapers that Nobel Prize winner Dr. Yunus announced that he had abandoned his plan to launch a political party.

A few months back Dr. Yunus had launched his own political party to reform the corrupt political society and to change the fate of the oppressed people in Bangladesh. By showing some reason, Dr. Yunus had backtracked from floating his own political party.

It is a very good decision, because politics in the sub-continent is very dirty.

So, he should not involve himself in politics. He is doing the right job by

helping poor people through his Grameen Bank where millions of people are being benefited. If Dr. Yunus wants to serve the nation, politics is not necessary, he should pay more attention to the poverty alleviation programme, quality of education and health in rural areas and other development issues.

In his recent interview Dr. Yunus called for sending

poverty museum by 2020 in Bangladesh. His call is no doubt very good because he is full of enthusiasm and courage, he can change the fate of the poor people without getting involved in politics. May his dream come true.

Zafar Iqbal
Karachi, Pakistan

Swindlers at work

A group of female snake charmers have found out a new technique of extorting money from single female passengers travelling in rickshaw or CNG or any other open window vehicle. They carry small snakes in wooden/leather box/bag and bring out those before the single female passenger and demand money. Female passengers, out of fear, donate cash as demanded. On May 8 five such female snake charmers were collecting money right under the nose of traffic personnel on duty in Gulshan-2 round about at around 11:00 hrs. One passenger was attacked by three of them in succession and thrice she had to pay Tk 20 to 50. If refused they would throw the snake on her as threatened. I called the Gulshan PS and police control room and brought the matter to their notice. I don't know what action they have taken.

Readers attacked by such unscrupulous persons are requested to narrate their story to Gulshan police at 9980234.

Shams
Gulshan, Dhaka

PSC and 27th BCS

A report titled "Telltale evidence of corruption at PSC" was published in The Daily Star on 4th July, 2007 with documentary information regarding corruption with the 27th BCS. I do not know what happened in the PSC but strongly object to the statement "Not a single viva candidate on October 12, 2006 and November 28, 2006 was successful". I checked the viva voce schedule and the published result sheets and found that around 40 students were selected on October 12, 2006 and around 10 students on November 28, 2006.

I am from a simple lower middle class family in Chapai Nawabganj. I stood 70th in the admission test of DU and got admitted in the department of International Relations. I was heavily dependent on The Daily Star which helped me not only to take preparation for the BCS but also to complete my master's course.

But I am shocked by the report not based on facts.

Shajahan Ali
A successful candidate

CONTESTING FROM MULTIPLE CONSTITUENCIES

In the ideal practice of most parliamentary democracies, candidates are not permitted to contest from more than one constituency, and are required to be residents of the constituency they are contesting from. But the practice in Bangladesh has been way apart.

Candidates can contest from up to five constituencies and every Tom, Dick and Harry can contest from any X, Y or Z constituency. This practice leads to huge loss of national resources as the EC has to arrange many bi-elections and the candidates contesting in bi-elections have to spend the campaign money twice. A struggling country with scarce resources like Bangladesh can not allow this wastage.

Often the impact of this provision can be far reaching. A party may form government after winning a certain number of seats in the parliament, but after completing the bi-elections the table may turn around if the party loses some

seats. Such a situation will lead to chaos due to intimidation and election manipulation, should the winning party find itself at risk of losing power.

The provision to contest from five constituencies was created by the political leaders who wanted to secure their seats in the parliament. We can not allow some politicians who want to be elected by hook or by crook to secure their self interest at the cost of national interest. If contesting from multiple constituencies is allowed, the MPs should also be allowed to keep those seats if elected since they have been elected by the people who want them to be their representatives.

Professor Dr. NA Kalimullah, Chairman of Janipop, has been advocating the idea that one candidate should be allowed to contest from one seat only, and I totally agree with him. Having to contest from multiple constituencies means that the candidate is not confident enough of his/her popularity. In

that case, should the candidate think of being a national leader and leading the nation? Leadership must start from home.

Contesting from constituencies one doesn't belong to or resides in should also be discouraged. This practice will lead to confining leaderships in the hands of a few people and will not allow new leaders to rise. A parliament member who is from his own constituency will have a better understanding of the local problems and policy requirements.

Now that the EC has opened discussion with the civil society on proposed election law reforms and is in the process of amending the laws, I hope the above points will be taken into consideration.

Javed Ahsan
Dhaka