



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.

Hasina's arrest



I was reading your commentary regarding Hasina's arrest. With all due respect to you, I am quite surprised and saddened by your sympathy towards her! How can we forget so fast what a cycle of violence and uncertainty we were passing through as a nation not too long ago? Since our liberation from Pakistan (more than three decades ago), the AL /BNP/ Jamaat / JP have failed to give the nation anything good in the name of so-called democracy.

Have we forgotten those dark days of continuous hartals, street agitations, port shutdown, destruction of public properties, emergence of radicals and killings in the streets which the world was watching over and over, and not to mention the major violation of human rights?

So, why should we cry if Hasina or Khaleda is arrested and sent to jail?

I would love to see Bangladesh as a functional democratic nation where the citizens are given every opportunity to flourish in peace and prosperity, where a mother of father doesn't need to worry about sending their kids to school on a hartial day. The kind of democracy we have seen so far in Bangladesh is nothing but a sham.

miliated us as a nation in front of the world.

The interim govt. has been in power for only six months and we must not forget that they came to rescue us in a very critical time of our history. It is almost impossible for the present govt. to clear the mess that was left by mostly the BNP and the AL for decades. Is it rational to think that everything will be back to normal if we had an election tomorrow with the same old faces?

Democracy is a system to run a government. It has worked well with some nations and some have failed. A nation needs visionary leadership to move ahead. We are certainly lacking that.

Bring those culprits to justice who ruined our hope as a nation. Hasina, Khaleda or Nizami, no one is above the law. This is the only chance we got to change our fate. Let us be united at this critical moment.

When the time is right, democracy is more than welcome.

Reza Rahman

USA

We are outraged to see the manner in which a prominent leader like Sheikh

Hasina has been arrested by the caretaker government (I do not know why this government is called "army-backed" by the media, and I also do not know what it really means!). One wonders what on earth was in the mind of the people who made the decision to arrest Hasina in an intimidating manner with a display of "might" by sending hundreds of policemen! It seems there was a conscious effort to instill fear in the minds of the people not to stand up against her arrest.

It is really naïve to think that Hasina's arrest will make things any better. The caretaker government has earned a lot of praise for what it is doing against corruption, but when Hasina was initially barred from returning to the country from the US and attempts were made to send Khaleda Zia overseas, the government lost all the credibility in my eyes. It was obvious to everyone that there are people in the government who are working behind the scenes to make sure that the two top leaders of the two top parties in Bangladesh are dislodged from their positions.

The question is whether anyone has heard any such thing in any democracy anywhere in the world! Who gives the right to anyone not in the judiciary to decide who will do politics and who will not? These things are providing good sources for foreigners to make jokes about our country.

It is unfortunate that a government whose primary responsibility is to create an environment for a free and fair election is not fair anymore. It is totally unfair and unjustifiable to arrest Hasina in a highhanded manner even if she has done things that might be proven unlawful by the court. There is no reason for the government to think this will instill fear in the minds of fearless Bangladeshis who fought a war without fear to liberate their motherland. No matter which party one supports, there is no way anyone can justify outrageous things that were done with both Hasina and Khaleda.

Our hopes are dashed. We are certain to see a farcical election and a puppet-government!

Muktadir S. Hossain, PhD

National Cancer Institute

National Institutes of Health

Bethesda

USA

Khaleda's comments

The newspapers are publishing reports regarding comments made by Khaleda Zia on the current political situation.

She has been focusing on the following:

1. The government is not touching those who favour reforms.
2. Instructing her party men over telephone to launch anti-government protests abroad.
3. Accusing the government of adopting double standards in the anti-corruption drive.
4. Branding the reformists as conspirators.

Such provocative comments might spell disaster for the nation.

Altaf Hossain

Dharmundi, Dhaka

Geoff Lawson

Pakistan recently named Geoff Lawson as their national cricket team's coach. I believe it is a great step taken by the PCB. Shoib Akther rightly said that he was confident that Lawson could lift them to the level where they could become world beaters.

Finally, the Pakistan cricket team will be under the shadow of an Aussie coach. Lawson can change the mentality of the players by encouraging them to be more aggressive.

However, it is worth mentioning that it won't be an easy job for Lawson because he has to rebuild the team since they had a disappointing World Cup campaign. I believe Lawson will be a successful coach and make the Pakistani cricket team a challenging one, once again.

Wasif Wahed

On e-mail

Looking for good men!

We know that General Moeen U Ahmed has all the good intentions to help the country to come out of the ruins. But for the sake of avoiding unnecessary criticism from the local press and foreign governments, we would request him not to comment on reforms while he is in charge of the army. Rather, these words of reforms should be spelled out by our chief adviser.

We have seen the exemplary gesture of General Moeen. He brought an old man out of jail by paying money out of his pocket. This should be taken as an example and be followed by others. This was another example of injustice existing in our country where we see that so many corrupt and rich people escaped jail even though they borrowed millions from bank and

did not repay, whereas an old man of above eighty was going to jail for not repaying a small amount of loan!

N.G. Chaudhury

Luxembourg

British government's decision

The British government has effectively closed the door on asylum seekers from Bangladesh, despite having seen a dossier which detailed more than 700 attacks by fundamentalists on ethnic and religious minorities in the country.

The document offers compelling evidence that serious attacks and persecution of Hindu, Christian and other minorities are on the rise.

Backed by evidence from local and international development groups sent to the government several months ago, it includes reports on torture, extra-judicial killing, gang rape, looting and burning of temples and churches, eviction, beating, grabbing of land, destruction of property, financial extortion and threats of physical violence. All the cases have been reported to the police.

Yet the Home Office apparently ignored the dossier when it announced last month that Bangladesh, along with five other countries, was being added to the "white list" of 24 countries from where asylum applications are presumed from the outset to be unlikely to succeed.

"The countries that we are adding to the list today are generally safe - individuals from these countries are not routinely fleeing for their lives and do not routinely need our protection under the Geneva Convention," the Home Office minister, Beverley Hughes, said.

The Home Office has reiterated that position. "Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy with a constitution that allows for an independent judiciary. We maintain our commitment to providing a safe haven for asylum seekers," a spokeswoman said, adding that Bangladeshis would still be able to seek asylum here.

But the Guardian has uncovered evidence that Bangladesh is sliding into a situation in which oppression of minorities is becoming systematic.

The country, which is 85% Muslim but has a long tradition of tolerance to religious minorities, is being pushed towards fundamentalism by the Jamaat-e-Islami, which is growing rapidly in the poorest rural areas, according to organisations on the ground.

"The British government knows

what is happening. They have been sent the information," said Rosaline Costa, director of the human rights group, Hotline Bangladesh. "It says there is communal harmony, but this is a lie... There are many genuine asylum seekers."

The present wave of attacks was triggered by the 2001 elections when violence flared across Bangladesh. The Human Rights Congress for Bangladeshi Minorities estimated that dozens of people were killed, more than 1,000

women from minority groups were raped and several thousand people lost their land in the three months around the election.

The Bangladesh government has admitted that some atrocities have taken place, but insists that the violence is not religiously motivated.

David Bonner

Farmgate, Dhaka



Pakistan scene

I welcome the Pakistan's Supreme Court decision on the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Mr. Iftekhar M Chaudhury. The judgment demonstrated a clear message to the rest of the world that justice prevails in Pakistan though a military government is in power there. General Musharraf ousted independent-minded Chief Justice Iftekhar Chaudhury in March, but the court reinstated him and quashed corruption charges filed by the President in what critics say was a bid to retain his grip on power.

This has boosted the morale and raised their heads with pride in the entire world and, consequently, our faith is restored in the system of deliverance of justice in the land of Pakistan.

There are many cases of innocent people like Mr. Chaudhury who have been ousted in the name of military rule without any genuine proof and evidence and have been put behind the bars.

Military autocracy doesn't really mean anything. The term is the creation of the western media to malign the image of the military in the eyes of the other professional communities.

Gopal Sengupta

Canada