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Democracy in Bangladesh

The Roadmap of Election has been announced though it is too late. According to the Roadmap the next parliamentary election will be held by December next year. It is also too late. Then I will say that the govt. should take time to present a free, fair and impartial election to the nation if they need it. We all know that nothing is possible overnight. Such as it took a lot of time to establish democracy in Bangladesh. The present caretaker govt. took the charge of the country when democracy in Bangladesh was about to sink into oblivion. No sector was corruption free. Such as Public Service Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission,

administration, education sector etc. Before holding the next election these sectors must be made free from corruption. And for this the govt. needs time. As a school teacher, I would like to emphasise here that first of all the 'Education Sector' should be made free from malpractice. And an education commission should be set up. The govt. should appoint such men to the said commission as will be competent, qualified, honest, sincere and active. **Md. Abdus Salam**
Assistant Teacher (English)
Joypara Pilot High School
Joypara, Dohar, Dhaka

Wemourn

We are deeply shocked at the demise of renowned historian and former vice chancellor of Chittagong University Professor Dr Abdul Karim. Late Prof Abdul Karim was an internationally renowned historian, researcher and Professor Emeritus. He had his post graduation in history from Dhaka University, and Doctorate degree from University of London on his thesis "Murshid Kuli Khan and his times" -- he had his first Doctorate Degree from the University of Dhaka as well. He worked at the department of history in Dhaka and Chittagong universities before his taking on the office of the vice chancellor of Chittagong University in 1975. Prof Karim was a pioneering personality in terms of studying history and searching for its diverse intricacies. He brought in, in his indomitable search for novelties, quite an immense degree of innovative ideas in his favourite research field "Middle age of the history of Bengal"

We all, here at DELL Department of English Language & Literature, Premier University, Chittagong, deeply mourn the demise of this visionary man and pray to the Almighty for the salvation of his departed soul. **Faculty members**
Dept. of English Language & Literature
(DELL)
Premier University, Chittagong

Two leaders

These two ladies are now trying to play with public sentiment to hide their own faults and trying to put the CTG in an awkward position. Some newspapers in Bangladesh and some blind followers of the AL and the BNP are helping them to do this. For their own interest they are trying to destroy the bright future of our motherland. **Dr. Majumder**
Darmstadt, Germany

Load-shedding

Since 24 July night the people of Basabo-Goran-Madartek have been suffering immensely; we are experiencing load-shedding for the night. Overall, we receive electricity for 5-6 hours a day. Moreover, no one seems to even notice the problem. We hope the authorities will look into the matter. I would also request you to publish a report on our plight. **A citizen**
South Goran
Dhaka

Hasina's arrest

As a Bangladeshi born British citizen living in the UK all my life, I was fortunate enough to spend the first few months of 2007 in Bangladesh and witness firsthand some of the changes occurring in the country. For the last 31 years that I've been living in the UK, I have never much cared about Bangladesh or its predicament. Yes, like all Bangladeshis I sent my zakat money not caring about where it went or how it was spent. My biggest grievance regarding Bangladesh is that despite all the evidence against corrupt politicians, many people continue to support and accept them. It perplexes me as to why someone would want to die for a



PHOTO: AFP

of learning as it was in the past. The present regime should take up this issue as a priority and make it happen by taking actions against those involved in corruption (both financial and moral) in all the universities. The nation needs to see some tangible actions being taken, for awakening the whole teachers community and also to revitalize the education sector. If these so-called teachers, who are supposed to be the conscience of the nation, get away with such eyewash, then we should release everybody arrested so far on corruption charges. **M. Hashem**
One-mail

May we ask a few questions to the Dhaka University teachers who joined the meeting to make the announcement in favour of Sheikh Hasina as well as Khaleda Zia. Why should Sheikh Hasina be released from jail unconditionally? Is it because she is the daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman? Is it because she was the ex-prime minister of the country? Is it because of her own style of democracy? Do you have any legal right to put any pressure on the government to release a person facing corruption charges? Last of all, I would like to request all of you: if you don't feel comfortable when you see that your beloved leader is in trouble, please try to keep silent. Don't try to mislead the ill-fated nation. At least, we don't expect such irresponsible activities from a section of our university teachers. Enough is enough! **K.M. Shamsuzzaman**
Moscow, Russia

It is so disdainful to see DU teachers wearing black ribbons to protest against the caretaker government for their actions against the two leaders of our country. On top of that, they are inciting students to go on strike. This is nothing but supporting corruption and the corrupt.

They are supposed to be educated people. Are they really teachers? Have they lost their senses? Can't they judge between right and wrong? Whoever supports evil are evil themselves. **N.G. Chaudhury**
Luxembourg

What a shame! University teachers abstaining from work to protest the arrest of a politician accused of money extortion! **Iqbal Mahmood, Ph.D**
Associate Engineer
Petra Geotechnical, Inc.
Murrieta, CA

Italian syndrome?

What is happening in Bangladesh is not at all unprecedented. Almost identical events occurred in Italy in the early 1990s. But we have to go back a bit. Mussolini had nearly destroyed the Mafia. After his defeat, the Americans, who are fond of the vilest bedfellows, resuscitated the mob in order to fight off communism. The Christian Democratic Party (DC) - this was the age of the Christian Democratic Parties in Europe - forged a symbiosis with the Mafia.

The Italian Church was mobilised to feed votes to the DC - anything against the communist devil! (Italo Calvino recounts how the good nuns of post-war Turin brought the mentally ill and defectives in their care to cast votes.) Supported partly by American cash, the Social Democratic Party became a coalition partner of the DC.

Thus, over some fifty years, the Christian Democrats became corrupt and criminal. Then the Berlin Wall collapsed, and, with it, Communism. The Christian Democrats and the Mafia were liabilities now. A systematic purge of the Italian ruling elite began. It was engineered by some brave magistrates known as mani pulite (clean hands), with, no doubt, the United States in the background. Several of those magistrates were assassinated by the mob. But enough

DU teachers

As people say rot starts from the head, in our country the same thing happened. Therefore, we must make our highest seat of education free from all evils and make it a prestigious place

Reforms in public universities

I have seen reports on the reforms in the public universities in Bangladesh in different daily newspapers. This has been long due and thanks to the caretaker government for taking this initiative. My request to the people in charge of making changes is to make this transparent and open to all including the NRBs (Non-Resident-Bangladeshis). There are many Bangladeshis teaching in universities across the world. They can share their experiences of working in world's renowned universities. It can be done using Bangladeshi consulates in different countries, asking for their opinion using websites etc. I would like to put two recommendations here. One is to

replace the two positions --- chancellor and vice chancellor by one position called "president". This will stop political interference. Currently, the chancellor is either the prime minister or the president of the country. They are political persons and we have seen different student bodies calling strike to stop their entry into the campuses. Second, the president will be a very professional position. He will be highly paid and his contract will be for two years and can be renewed after judging his performance. The president's position needs to be open to NRBs. I even believe the president of any engineering university can be any national who is very experienced in similar positions.



The performance of the president will be judged by reduction of session jam, connecting university research with different companies and lifting the university ranking. This may

sound like the coach of the cricket team! **Manjurul Hoque**
Dallas, Texas, USA

penitenti (penitent mobsters) were rustled up to blow the whistle on the Mafia.

Bribe taking was discovered within the judiciary. The press came under public suspicion, as did the Vatican. By late 1993, allegations had been made against over 3,000 politicians, business executives, and civil servants, of whom almost a third had been arrested or were under investigation, causing such a backlog in the courts that, it was estimated, the trials might not be concluded for a decade. Ten of those accused had committed suicide. (Nothing so dramatic has yet happened in Bangladesh: we don't even have 500 politicians behind the bars, let alone 1,000, and nobody's shot himself.)

The Italian Christian Democrats were finished. This was remarkable: a party that was co-founder of the European Union, the Vatican's favourite, a bulwark against communism, was gone! Corruption did return, notably in the shape of Silvio Berlusconi; and so did the mafia, which was never an entirely criminal organisation, but performed social services in the poorer south of Italy. However, the mafia was a shadow of its former self, and the nexus between politics and organised crime had been broken. In Bangladesh, things happened in reverse. The Berlin Wall collapsed, and General Ershad was given the heave-ho by the donors (donor-propped dictators were falling like

dominoes after 1989 - in that year, there were three democracies in Africa; in 1991, there were thirty! For more on the subject, see Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz's excellent book, Africa Works.) Thus, instead of one dictator, we had two; and instead of men with guns, we had boys with guns. Sixteen years later, the western powers realized that democracy was going the usual way, and sought to clean up their little colony called Bangladesh. Thus, we have our own brand of mani pulite, the ostensible ridding of corruption and actual dismantling of dysfunctional political parties. **Iftekhar Sayeed**
Dhannandi, Dhaka
Surprising!

It's surprising that some enlightened people are also writing and shouting against the legal action taken by the authorities against the corrupt leaders. How can we stand on their side as they were not doing politics for the betterment of our country? We know all are not corrupt, but whoever misused power must be punished. No doubt, this is the time to do something wholeheartedly for the welfare of the people of Bangladesh. In the past years, we have seen leaders divided our society into many parts and looted poor people's wealth. We need to be united and must put emphasis on alleviation of poverty. **Sarwar Chowdhury**
Abu Dhabi, UAE

Prices of essentials

The government with all its sincere wishes could not bring down the prices of essentials. The evil attitude of the business syndicate is apparent and it will be much more telling on the people during Ramadan!

During the Second World War, the then British government introduced food rationing to provide relief to the general people against high price. The then Civil Supplies Dept. was given the responsibility of appointing ration dealers to sell essentials at a cheaper price.

Most essentials like rice, wheat, sugar, edible oil, butter oil or powdered milk etc. were procured by appointed ration dealers who sold these items to enlisted individual ration card holders of the area at the prescribed rate. Certain percentage of commission was allowed to the ration shop dealer. This rationing system was prevalent for many years in Bangladesh. Our government may buy those essentials in bulk quantity from countries like Malaysia, India, Thailand and Pakistan at competitive prices through the TCB. Initially, the system may be started in big cities and towns like Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna; for instance, on a rough calculation of area-wise population of Dhaka. The government may select 400/500 spots for ration shops.

The old files and retired food department officials may come up with the plan and procedures to implement this arrangement.

This is a tried and conventional method that worked successfully. **Rumi Ahmed**
Blooming Dale, Banani, Dhaka

The level of prices of essential commodities has already exceeded the limit of tolerance. The way rains have set in and flood is looming, it seems that we are indeed heading towards a tough time. The government is so busy with reforms and the anti-corruption



drive that they have failed to address the issue properly. The people may very soon believe that a corruption free society and a marketplace where prices are within their affordability

level don't go together! That would be the beginning of the end. **Mahmudul Hasan**
DU

Palestinians and elusive peace

As former British Prime Minister Tony Blair sets on his mission to bring peace among the Palestinians and Israel, he must first urge the Palestinians to stop slaughtering each other.

Both Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas have been elected by the Palestinian people. Why then are they slaughtering each other? Hamas has been known for its extreme violence against Israeli civilians. But its violence is not solely directed at Israelis. During recent fighting for control of Gaza, Human Rights Watch, an independent human rights group, accused Hamas of "violations of international humanitarian

law, in some cases amounting to war crimes." These crimes include killing of non-combatants, killing the sick inside hospitals and summary executions of Palestinians supporting Fatah. The latest troubling sign that Hamas is trying to extend its terror to the supporters of Fatah came into spotlight on July 24 when supporters of Hamas and Fatah clashed at a university campus at Nabulus in West Bank. The latest clash at An Najah National University was the biggest between rival Palestinian factions since the fall of Gaza to Hamas last month. Hamas supporters opened fire on students supporting President Abbas before the Palestinian security

forces intervened. In the clash three were wounded in gunfire. The confrontation reflected Hamas' determination to expand the conflict in the West Bank. University President Rami Hamdallah held Hamas responsible for the fighting. He said that since the Hamas takeover of Gaza, An Najah has not permitted political activity of students on campus, and that Hamas violated the ban. It seems that Hamas is trying to bring its war against Fatah to the West Bank where President Mahmoud Abbas enjoys greater support. However, Hamas is better armed and far more ruthless and if not contained, renewed

violence will erupt across the West Bank. It is becoming increasingly clear that if the Palestinians continue to slaughter each other, there will be no peace in the region. It is imperative that either Hamas must give up its attacks on the Palestinians or it should be marginalised by the international community. Palestinians must stop slaughtering each other if they want peace. **Mahmood Elahi**
Ottawa, Canada