

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.



Our demand

If the present caretaker government fails to run the government properly, Bangladesh will be in great danger. Over the last thirty-six years, no government was widely accepted by the nation

- and no one in Bangladesh respects our political leaders!
- We want--
- Corruption free Bangladesh.
- Proper leadership.
- True democracy.
- Justice.

- Freedom of information.
- Freedom of true politics.
- Quality education.
- Rigging free election.
- Poverty free Bangladesh.

Hasan Rahman
On e-mail

A critical phase

Bangladesh has now entered the most critical phase of its political transition. The most recent events of student unrest and public outburst all over the country make us very concerned about the process of establishing a democratic and accountable government. This has given rise to many pertinent issues. Some of them are important and seen as negative fallouts from the current events.

1. I quote a news item from one Internet edition of news letter (e-mela.com) published probably from New York, USA, on August 27, 2007. It says that more than 87,000 people, including teachers and students, are facing cases filed against them. We think this new model of "Police case" would definitely pave the way for a new dimension of human rights violation in Bangladesh. Given the fact that

the human rights groups in Bangladesh are not effective enough to be heard by the authorities, we do not know how one can get rid of this situation. I am not a lawyer and can not pass any opinion on the legal side of the issue.

However, my question is: how the law of the land interprets it from the perspective of human rights?

2. A more serious concern is the overall relation between the student community and the law enforcers. The situation has been further aggravated due to the alleged undignified behaviour with the arrested senior teachers of the universities.

We think the CTG would put all its resources in a conciliatory manner to redress the issue of student unrest, and would not allow any political inhibition to stand on the way of reconciliation. The military backed government is

definitely powerful enough to achieve a few short term goals, but ultimately the path of dialogue and reconciliation has to be chosen.

Therefore, the sooner the better for all concerned.

3. We think it is high time for the CTG to proceed with the formation of the "Human Rights Commission" and create a civil check and balance.

A reader
On e-mail

The arsenic bomb

We the people of the Gangetic delta of this subcontinent have more to fear the "arsenic bomb" rather than any "Atom or Hydrogen Bomb". Arsenic leaching into our subsoil water will slowly but surely lead to higher incidence of cancer and other associated fatalities for human beings.

Chances of birds and animals being wiped out due to these fatal

infections are also there.

A recent newspaper report (Sept:01) presents a frightening scenario for our young generation, who may have to face its vicious effects later.

Globally, about 140 million people are at risk in Asia and Africa! This dismal observation by Allan Smith of the University of California, Berkley, is worthy of repetition. He said: "I don't know of one government agency which has given this the priority it deserves". May be we are too busy quibbling over political and trade issues to visualise this dismal future that lies ahead for us!

Maybe, we should seriously consider the alternative for using untreated well water as the main source of potable and daily use water. The CTG should take up this grave national issue and marshal the needed resources for research and study on a priority basis, and not wait for the elected government's coming into office. For this vital need, the government, NGOs and all concerned should jointly appeal to the international donors to help us in this important matter!

It is unfortunate that wells are our primary potable water source all over the country. The need is installing and operating technically viable de-arsenification plants all over the country. It is a huge task, and needs a gigantic effort to implement it. Should we not commit ourselves to containing this vital problem facing us?

S.A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka

Labour Day in Canada

Labour Day is an important event in the national life in Canada. This day is celebrated on the 1st Monday of September in Canada since 1880. This year, the day was observed on 3rd September 2007.

Toronto printers went on strike in 1872 to establish 54 hrs work week, while union activity was considered illegal by the government. Protesters eventually established their rights when Prime Minister Sir John McDonald agreed to repeal the anti-union laws and arranged the release of protest organisers as well. Thus the Labour Day of Canada is different from the May Day, although the spirit of establishing the workers' rights was almost similar.

Kumar Prithwiraj Nath

Toronto, Canada

Campus violence

Since the incident at Dhaka University on 20 August 2007, many people are thinking how a trifling matter can lead to a volcanic-eruption like situation that compelled the CTG to impose curfew in the divisional cities to bring it under control. Expressing deep regret from the government, withdrawal of army camp from the varsity campus and the beginning of the process of judicial enquiry failed to satisfy the students. So thousands of them came out of the dormitories with sticks and stones and fought with police injuring over 150 people and damaging at least 100 vehicles. Even the girl students came out in large numbers with bamboo sticks on their hands.

We should think how our children who are studying at the highest level become so furious and go for such violent acts that bring disgrace to all of us. No doubt, the incident that triggered the violence was the act of some individuals. But what our students, the future of the nation, did cannot be accepted. We, the guardians of the students, should regularly monitor their activities and behaviour even if they are grown up and studying in varsities where they are supposedly being taken care of by their teachers. But ultimately they are our children and what they are learning & what character they are building there is very important for the families they belong to.

So, let us open our eyes and try to find out what is going wrong that encourages them to be so hostile that just out of anger they are indiscriminately damaging government & private properties, including private vehicles that some one might have purchased with his hard earned savings or against loans from the banks.

Let us also take into account the statement of the army chief that an evil force poured in crores of taka to instigate this vandalism.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna

Arrests of teachers

With the detention of a number of university teachers who are alleged to have incited the recent violence on and outside campuses across the country, the notion that teaching is a noble profession is now under dispute among many. With their

positions tenured and a performance scrutiny mechanism non-existent, many of these self-styled intellectuals for years have not produced academic papers of some repute, lot of them have routinely affixed signatures on questionable statements, and a great number have been profiting enormously from coaching at private institutions. They, indeed, are modern day smooth operatives, just like politicians, and surely do

not invoke the image of their predecessors much respected for dedication in shaping young minds. It is also naive to view them as 'genius' just because they happen to have good academic credentials; they are no more different from others who have opted for different professions and creditably performing in a competitive, unsheltered world. If our former president, prime ministers, and legislators can be questioned,

booked, and jailed for their misdeeds, we do not see why the teachers should be immune from questioning for their suspected role in the violence that saw so much destruction.

We, however, hope that they would come out clean, and help salvage whatever image of their profession is left out.

Nayeem Jafar
New Jersey, USA

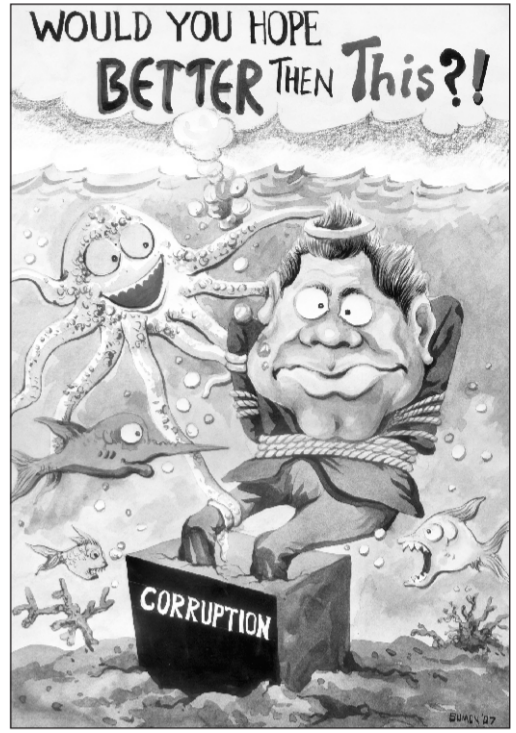
Corruption syndrome

There are various types of corruption that readily spring to mind and it is necessary to distinguish them from each other for effective remedies.

1. Systemic corruption. This is the most virulent as the whole country runs on personal contacts. Whether you want a business contract, a government permit, or anything else from any official quarter including hospital admission, school admission etc unless you yourself are powerful or know someone influential, or 'have access to a source', it cannot be done. This is even if you fulfill all the requirements and are prepared to pay the prescribed fees. This is the bane of our country and our times and is the root of systemic corruption. Of course, in a country where many people are illiterate and require the services of a scribe to write even a simple letter or petition, agency or influential contacts thrive. The remedies therefore are widespread education for the public at large and for every government department, office, or semi-government offices or institutions, or NGOs to have properly approved 'office procedures' like ISO 9000 standard and regular audit to ensure compliance with these procedures and reporting of any violation for remedial or punitive action. There must also be proper information and complaint avenues in every institution and office.

Adherence to rule of law in the form of regulations and correct procedures within a stipulated time for all interested parties must be the norm and the connection with agents or contacts must be discouraged, or even penalised. Principles must be put before close relatives and friends or people with money.

2. Impromptu or chance corruption. An example is say where a traffic police takes some money and lets go a traffic rules offender. It is difficult to eradicate such corruption, however wider education of all



public and law enforcing agencies will reduce this. Vigilance by the ACC or 'police internal affairs' must be exercised so that this type of impromptu corruption does not lead to systemic corruption.

There may be many other kinds of real corruption or wrongly termed corruption in our society but it is necessary to clearly identify and distinguish each of them for proper diagnosis and effective remedy. An overall confused term like 'corruption' and trying to find its remedy is no better than trying to find a cure for a 'disease' without knowing anything more.

Engineer Shafi Ahmed
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