

PALASH KHAN/DRIKNEWS

Unelected, and inhibited by the army's strong hand, Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed and his team have never succeeded in imposing themselves as the leadership of the nation.

A friend was recounting to me how recently he was at an awards function with the chief adviser (quite logically) as chief guest, and how during Dr. Ahmed's speech, he and his colleagues as part of the production team had to usher throngs of people back to their seats as they started to leave so it wouldn't look too bad for the cameras. They just didn't have the time for it. One can understand, even appreciate, when it is done out of protest, but when it is done out of apathy, no event management team should have to deal with an audience walking out in the midst of a head of government's speech!

General Moeen on the other hand, has consistently and for too long now failed to define himself to the people. Was he the unlikely messiah, there to lead by example and with his loyal troops under him, finally a force to take on and bring down the party cadres and strongmen who (mis)ruled these shores for so long?

Or was he a mere guide, there to play a paternal role as the caretaker government implemented the necessary changes? Or was he, dare I add, even a pawn himself, subject to external pressures, catering to the whims of a powerful international lobby?

We have never been able to quite place him. And thus, never able to quite invest our faith in him. If he was to be the messiah, he was far too hesitant, too careful to protect his own image from being that of a power-hungry general in the South Asian tradition of names such as Ershad and Musharraf.

If he was to be the guide, his shadow hung too heavy over the caretaker government for the partnership to be an effective one. And if he was just a pawn as some quarters now suggest, even 1/11 was one day too long for him to enjoy the stature he did.

Whatever he was, he has at-least proven what he was not: A leader. And with no-one else there to assume that role during this period, that power vacuum from January 2007 has never really been filled.

We never knew quite which way to look when the prices kept going up, when natural disaster struck, in a word when we needed leadership. Was it in the chief adviser's office, or further down the road inside the cantonment? Without firm leadership, neither could the present situation last, nor could it leave any lasting impact.