Time to Deliver

What we want from the next government

As we ready ourselves for the next general elections what is on every voter's mind is: Will the next government live up to the expectations we have of it? The expectations are no doubt huge compared to those preceding the last elections. It is a far more mature electorate that the political parties have to now convince, one that is skeptical of promises declared in ambitious manifestoes, weary of the shameless corruption of past governments and fearful of economic insecurity and lack of basic freedoms. It is also an electorate eager to exercise its democratic right and thirsty for real change. In that sense many of the seasoned political parties may find that such expectations to be a little overwhelming, considering their long track record of failing to deliver and getting away with it. But they should also feel a great deal humbled by the fact that people still prefer democracy to any other form of governance, that they still have faith in the very parties that have often let them down, enough faith to give them yet another chance.

AASHA MEHREEN AMIN

It would be foolhardy and politically suicidal therefore, to let this chance slip away, and the next government must take this opportunity to prove to the people that it does have the will and capability of transforming this country into the strong, transparent and modern democracy that its painful birth aspired to be.

The last two years have been a wake up call for both the people and the political players. It started as a rescue mission to save the country from the anarchy that the major political parties had reduced the nation to. The anti-corruption drive of the caretaker government was lauded by the public who recognised the grievous damage that the cancerous growth of political corruption had caused, eroding away the very basic rights of any human being - the right to food, shelter, clothing, education, good health and physical security. But despite the satisfaction of seeing corrupt politicians and their cronies behind bars and paying for their crimes, there was an undeniable unease that an unelected government could not stay in power indefinitely, that the answer lay in reform. There were attempts to break parties and create or restructure new ones. The famous 'minus two' formula to exclude the two leaders of the two major parties was tried out. Many were incarcerated and then set free, often to the dismay of the confused public. Nothing really worked and with the growing discontent of the people who were beginning to find it impossible to survive the unprecedented price spiralling of essentials, it became obvious that it was only through the political process, no matter how challenged and flawed, that this country could emerge from the drowning waters.

It goes without saying that people's trust, hope and aspirations are centred on one particular institution-the parliament for it is the parliament that represents the people and determines every sphere of governance. Our greatest disappointment can be summed up in the utter misuse of this great institution by our elected parliamentarians who have abused their power to the extreme and made a mockery of our precious votes.

The power and integrity of the parliament can only be restored by a complete turnaround from past practices and a sincere effort to uphold democratic values.