

Members of Parliament must attend all sessions and the opposition must discard the practice of prolonoged boycott.

There are two major steps that the ruling party and opposition must take before they can even begin to regain people's confidence. The first is to acknowledge their past mistakes and never repeat them and the second is to learn from the achievements of the last two years and uphold them with grace and magnanimity.

Let's begin with parliamentary norms and code of conduct. In the past we have watched in dismay as Members of Parliament have carried out their bitter, petty squabbles at the expense of the taxpayers hard-earned money, which also pays for their salaries and those of their secretariat staff. The ruling party has completely disregarded the opposition's right to voice its opinion or express their grievances while the opposition has chosen indefinite periods of boycotting the parliament as a way of protest. Both practices have rendered the parliament paralysed and useless in promoting public welfare.

A culture of mutual respect and restraint must be practiced by our next parliamentarians. A code of conduct for parliamentarians should be made and adhered to; personal attacks and abusive language are not acceptable behaviour of lawmakers. There have to be sincere efforts to ensure participation of opposition MPs. Members of Parliament, moreover, must be able to operate from their conscience. In other words if a Member of Parliament thinks that a certain motion goes against the interest of the public or against democratic norms, he may freely object to it without fear of being expelled from his party and the loss of his or her seat in parliament. An intense debate on the fate of Article 70 should decide how to overcome this constraint.

From April to October 2008, Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB) carried out a countrywide survey of people from all walks of life on what their aspirations for the next parliament are.

The survey showed that people, for one thing, are very sure about what kind of qualities they expect their MPs to have. These include: being honest, known to the people of his or her constituency and aware of what they need, someone who upholds the spirit of our independence, who is non communal and believes in equal rights for all people regardless of their gender, religion, colour or race; who is logical and open-minded, who has had sufficient political experience in development at the grassroots level. The MP must be well educated although this includes having humane qualities and political experience. The respondents were also very particular about the type of MPs they didn't want-corrupt, owners of black money, loan defaulters, individuals associated with organised crime, war criminals and opportunists who use their position for personal benefit.

An interesting finding of the survey is that people