tried to hijack democracy by manipulating the caretaker system, leading to 1/11. BNP lost the elections in 2008, were reduced to a 10% minority from a two-thirds majority and became the main opposition party in Parliament. BNP had a wonderful opportunity to reinvent itself, by instituting democratic reforms and promoting young leaders to take over from failed leadership, distance itself from Hawa Bhaban and change the political culture of Bangladesh. But they have chosen to do exactly the opposite, embracing sycophancy and Paribartantra, keeping the same dinosaurs at the helm of the party, and hope to return to the days of Hawa Bhaban with Tarek Zia as PM. I voted for BNP in 2001 – if there is a free and fair election in 2014, do they expect my vote again?

Facebook, dozens of satellite TV channels and a powerful electronic and print media. Internet activists have emerged as a potent force with Shahbagh. Although many view Shahbagh as a pro AL movement and are alarmed by "Fashi Chai" (hang them) slogans, our rulers now know that they can no longer ignore the will of the people and remain in power. The will of the people is clear – we want justice, we want free and fair elections acceptable to all, we want transparent and accountable government, we want access to Youtube and an end to internet censorship, we want real democracy and not this sham that is Paribartantra propped up by vested interest.

To my fellow citizens, I salute you. Your judgment, patience and resilience are legendary. You



The Chhatra League goons who hacked Biswajit to death were only arrested because of media exposure, public outcry and a high court order.

PHOTO: STAR FILE

The silver lining in the dark clouds that are politics in Bangladesh is the people. Given the choice of the lesser of the two evils in every election since 1991, they have always made the right choice. They have never allowed any party two consecutive terms in power. While our politics and politicians continue to degenerate, the electorate is younger with a sizeable middle class, more educated, more informed and more conscious politically. We have 9.5 crore voters with 9 crore mobile phones, 6 crore have internet access, 30 lakh on

have been the engine of growth for Bangladesh despite our dysfunctional politics and bad governance. Cherish and protect our democracy at any cost. Leaders with vision, courage and integrity will emerge from the ashes of ideologically bankrupt politics. Digitalization of politics will inevitably return us to a Government of the people, for the people and by the people. Can you smell a Bangladeshi Spring in the air?

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