

A look at the current POLITICAL CRISIS

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EVERY day we see in the media graphic images and horror stories of innocent civilians -- victims of the ongoing political unrest. Who is to blame? The answer depends on who you ask; the opposition will point their fingers at the present government, and vice-versa. There is a saying, "Don't point fingers if your hands are not clean." This is an apt statement applicable to all the political players.

The present unrest is after all the result of self-serving political culture, dating to the 1980's -- when Ershad's regime was ousted by a joint effort of both BNP and AL. It saw a change in our parliamentary system, where the presidential mandate was changed for a prime minister-led system in accordance with the 1972 constitution. This was meant to be the first step towards a democratic movement. It is 2015 now, more than two decades after this first step; have we moved forward with time or is history repeating itself?

The '80s and elections under a dictator

Hussain Muhammad Ershad first paved the way for elections without the approval of opposition parties. In the mid '80s, BNP boycotted an election which was meant to take the country away from martial law and towards a democratically elected government. The election saw a landslide victory for Jatiya Party. However, this period was also short-lived as a controversial policy change saw all opposition walk out of parliament within a year. This inevitably led to the two main opposition leaders uniting to overthrow the proclaimed dictatorial regime in 1991. There was a two month long civil unrest movement which forced Ershad to step down and allow the first election to be held under a neutral government -- a policy that was sought by both BNP and AL.

The '90s: Ignore the people, take to streets, and race to power

Twenty-one years have passed, but the trend and political culture initiated by AL then is being repeated by BNP now. A by-election was held in Magura in 1994, which the opposition AL claimed was rigged, and protested against it. Strikes, street violence and civil unrest were all part of the game to pressurise BNP to transfer power to a neutral caretaker government for holding fresh elections.

The February election in 1996 saw BNP win, but the main opposition parties united in demonstrating against BNP -- accusations of a rigged election being prevalent. This pressure ultimately led to another parliamentary election -- which saw AL take power. AL's reign was marked by walk-outs by BNP, who accused the government of party bias, intimidation and victimisation of BNP party members.

2000: A new millennium yet same old Bangladeshi politics

The parliamentary elections in 2001 were again held under a caretaker government. However, partisanship dictated this period, as members of BNP were re-allocated swiftly to prominent positions -- a task undertaken under retaliatory bias and prejudice. Not surprisingly, the election results were not accepted by AL which staged parliamentary walk-outs -- a fashionable phenomenon courtesy of the 'developing' political culture.

BNP increased the retirement age of the entire judiciary on a whim to manipulate the appointment of the caretaker government head. As the constitution stated that the previous chief justice would, by default, take control of the entire process, BNP extended his tenure to ensure that their preferred man was at the right place at the right time.

2004 saw the first incident of "bus-burning" phenomenon that is a prevalent political strategy in current Bangladesh -- a double-decker was set ablaze in front of the Sheraton Hotel claiming 9 lives. It is evident that history had repeated itself and continues to do so.

The Fakhruddin Ahmed-led caretaker government held elections in 2008 after failure of the BNP-Jamaat ruling party to initiate one in 2006. Not surprisingly, AL won the elections comfortably and took power in 2009 as BNP had been accused of scandals and malpractice.

Ironically, AL, that had rubbed shoulders with BNP in the '90s to promote the implementation of the caretaker government system, removed the system saying it was prejudicial. It said that government administration would not change hands until after the election. BNP, outraged, reacted by taking the exact route AL had, in 1996, a path of violence and utter disrespect for the well-being of the country and its people.

Both parties have categorically butchered the democratic process; neither trusts the other to hold a free and fair election. The only way democracy can prevail is if we can set partisan politics aside and aim for an independent election. Thus far, we have formulated different means of maintaining our partisan and biased political agenda -- preventing the formation of a truly democratic nation -- with practices such as making members of the bureaucracy OSD or giving forced retirement to persons who were against the ruling party.

Our failure to finalise a strict policy has resulted in a scope for self-serving political appointments across the country. Einstein defined the insane as people who keep "doing the same thing over and over again and expect different results." Evidently, we are insane; we have constructed many barriers to democracy. Is it not high time we start to address the actual problems rather than continue the current cat-and-mouse game fuelled with blood and anguish?

The writer is a former student leader and political analyst.



Return campuses to KNOWLEDGE SEEKERS

ABDUL MANNAN

AMIDST the continuing deadly violence in the country unleashed by BNP-Jamaat to unseat the present government, a significant news seems to have lost its importance. A Dhaka court sentenced to death 5 Jahangirnagar University students belonging to Chhatra League, the student wing of AL, for killing Zubair Ahmed, a party mate and a final year student of the same university. Zubair was stabbed to death on January 8, 2012 inside the campus in a factional clash. Besides the 5 sentenced to death, 6 others were sentenced to life imprisonment. The trial was conducted in a Speedy Trial Tribunal, with Judge A.B.M. Nizamul Haque presiding. On December 18, 2013, the same court awarded death penalty to 8 Chhatra League leaders and 5 others for killing a tailor, Bishwajit Das, in old Dhaka on a day of hartal called by BNP. All those sentenced were students of Jagannath University.

The first major fatal student violence took place in 1974 when seven student activists belonging to Chhatra League were brutally gunned down in Mohsin Hall of Dhaka University on April 5. Police arrested the then Chhatra League General Secretary Shafiul Alam Pradhan a day after. The learned court found him guilty of masterminding this murder and sentenced him to life imprisonment. After the killing of Bangabandhu on August 15, 1975, Pradhan's punishment was lifted and he was released from prison by General Zia. Pradhan later floated a political party called Jatiya Ganatantrik Party, which is now part of Khaleda Zia-led 20 party alliance.

According to a report published in an English daily on February 10, 64 murders took place in Dhaka University Campus in four decades since independence, but none has ever been brought to justice. The only exception was Shafiul Alam Pradhan. On June 8, 2002, a female student of Buet, Sabekun Nahar Sony, was caught in a crossfire by feud-

ing JCD activists and instantly killed. Amongst those involved in this killing five were convicted, of whom Mushfiquddin, alias Tagar, and his two cohorts are serving life sentences while Nurul Islam Sagor and Mokammel Hayat Khan Mukti are on the run.

Besides Dhaka, Jahangirnagar and Jagannath Universities, the campuses of Rajshahi and Chittagong universities have over the years turned into killing fields for feuding student organisations. In Rajshahi University even teachers were not spared from the guns and swords of these killers. Islami Chhatra Shibir has gained notoriety for campus violence and they call the shots in campuses of Rajshahi and Chittagong, while the ruling party student wings always dominate in other campuses. Interestingly, except in Chittagong University, the previous ruling party goons change their colour, become members of the current ruling party overnight and often get prized organisational posts, sometimes in exchange for money.

In some universities even some faculty members and local political leaders become patrons of these trouble makers. Incidents of some later becoming faculty members in the same university where they were once campus goons are not rare. Credit must be given to the AL government as it was during its reign that three major convictions, that of Shafiul Alam Pradhan and of the killers of Bishwajit and Zubair, took place.

Many ask why university authorities are not able to punish those found guilty of crimes on campus. It has to be remembered that university authorities are often not equipped with proper facilities to conduct investigations into homicide, arson or vandalism that takes place on campus. Moreover, if there is a prima-facie case and if someone is found guilty, the maximum punishment the university can hand out is expulsion from the university. It is only after a proper police investigation can an offender be convicted under criminal law. Another problem that often makes a university investi-

gation difficult is that credible witnesses seldom testify before an enquiry committee constituting university members. Most of the convictions that take place are based on circumstantial evidence.

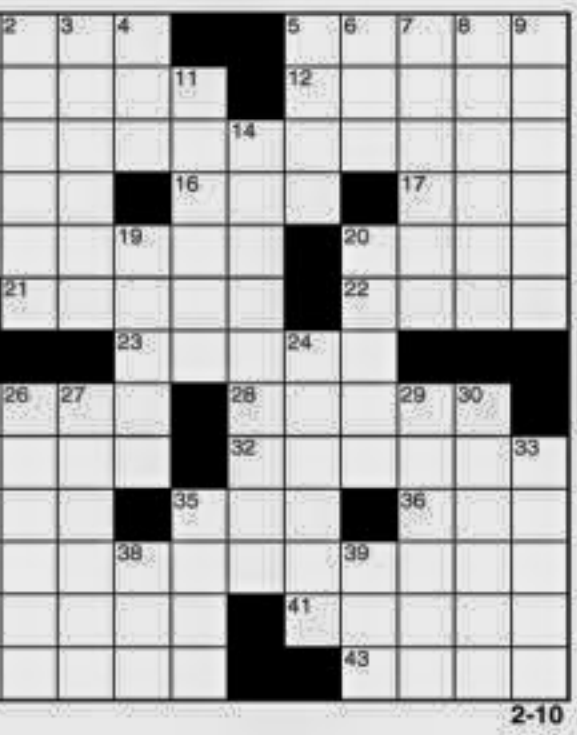
Earlier, student feuds usually originated from rivalry for dominance on campus and were confined amongst rival student parties. Now intra-party or factional feuds have become more common. The Zubair murder case of Jahangir Nagar is one such instance. Except those belonging to the Islami Chhatra Shibir, those belonging to other student organisations mostly do not have any political background. They get involved in student politics once they enter the universities and many of them soon become gun-toting campus hoodlums. Chhatra Shibir usually recruit their members early in their student life. They also run innumerable coaching centres across the country and help university admission seeking students in different ways. Many of them are later on forced to join Chhatra Shibir. Amongst all the student organisations, Chhatra Shibir is most organised, resourceful and professional.

Parents send their children to universities to study and not get killed or face the hangman's noose. But some of them unfortunately do. Once, student politics had a glorious record, but with the passage of time that has been completely lost. Today, no good and meritorious student wants to get into student politics. This is a loss for the nation. The trend can be reversed only if the major political parties have proper guidelines for their student wings and see that such guidelines are followed. No words would be enough to console Zubair's parents, and one also has to feel sorry for the parents of those convicted for killing Zubair. Campuses should be returned to knowledge seekers and not left to gun-toting killers.

The writer is a former Vice-chancellor, University of Chittagong. Currently he is teaching at ULAB, Dhaka.

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

DATE	CASTS
EDEN	IDIDIOTS
CORD	GARNET
ABRAHAM	GEE
LEANERS	UPA
GAS	MELD
CABER	POSEY
OVER	GEL
MAN	FREEBIE
BIZ	LINCOLN
ELEVEN	UNIT
DENIED	LEAR
DENTS	EDDY

QUOTABLE Quote

"We may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated."

- Maya Angelou

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Mediocre
 - 5 Nasser's successor
 - 10 Set off
 - 12 Dublin natives
 - 13 Big deal, so to speak
 - 15 Finish
 - 16 Bible boat
 - 17 Wager
 - 18 Judge's decision
 - 20 Utah ski resort
 - 21 Shilling change
 - 22 Forest growth
 - 23 Thompson of "SNL"
 - 25 Small dog, for short
 - 28 Attempts
 - 31 Like the desert
 - 32 Pressed
 - 34 Apt. units
 - 35 One -- million
 - 36 Earth; Prefix
 - 37 Store fixture
 - 40 Ryan of "Paper Moon"
 - 41 Bakery need
 - 42 Bookish group
- DOWN**
- 3 Chapel seating
 - 1 Morley of "60 Minutes"
 - 2 Door-pounder's cry
 - 3 Riding need
 - 4 Mine rock
 - 5 Robe material
 - 6 Circle segment
 - 7 Cisco Kid's horse
 - 8 Useful skills
 - 9 Greek letters
 - 11 Stupor
 - 14 Neighbor of Brazil
 - 19 Signed
 - 20 Prenatal test, for short
 - 24 Orderly displays
 - 25 Forgive
 - 26 Royal fur
 - 27 Face, in slang
 - 29 Hire
 - 30 Play-ground sight
 - 33 Active folks
 - 35 Miseries
 - 38 Small tablet
 - 39 Recipe amount

A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW
One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

CRYPTOQUOTE

JQGQFFQL MH JRS YMFHJ XICVW BCNS
QY C JRFSS RTVKFSK CVK HMEJA-YMUS
BCNS XQQW. LFMJS C NQQK QVS.

-XFCK BCMHISA

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THEN SING, YOUNG
HEARTS THAT ARE FULL OF CHEER, WITH
NEVER A THOUGHT OF SORROW; THE OLD
GOES OUT, BUT THE GLAD YOUNG YEAR
COMES MERRILY IN TOMORROW. -EMILY MILLER

Employment Notice Finance Controller

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A dynamic finance professional who will have an extremely broad range of responsibilities; management reporting, financial reporting, compliance of the unit, lead payment process and integrated Financial Shared Service (FSS), look after Treasury and Investor Relation in the country, ensure governance and control, actively participate in Gratuity and Provident Fund accounting compliances, manage and control insurances on behalf of the company, manage Overheads Budget and Information Management.

In addition to that he/she will be responsible for the change management processes for required or mandated changes as a Process Champion.

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- Ensure local finance governance framework is aligned with the corporate framework and application of local accounting policies is completely in sync with Unilever policy manual. Confirm all financial reporting is done complying with Unilever policy and relevant external regulations of the country e.g. [Company ACT, TAX law etc.].
- Responsible for Information Management, ensuring the timeliness, accuracy and quality of management information.
- Ensure all Unilever policy and standard are strictly followed in the respective areas and breach, if happens, is highlighted immediately.
- Ensure that Unilever recommended governance and control framework is implemented, embedded and practiced in the business with due rigor. Responsible for hygiene and governance of financial control of UBL.
- Lead Payment Process and Financial Shared Service, while ensuring compliance with Tax and VAT laws relating to payments.
- Look after Treasury and maintain strong and close relationship with financial institutions, analysts and investors Ensure Unilever, Bangladesh Bank and other relevant local laws are followed and Unilever interests are protected.
- Ensure appropriate budgetary control and delivering Overheads target for the Company.
- Be responsible as the Country Finance Process Champion for process efficiency and compliance; adhere to the Regional/Global process model.
- Provide leadership to the Controller's Team comprising of 17 people.

Ideally, you should have:

- Recognized finance/accounting qualification
- Detailed understanding of all major aspects of management and financial accounting
- Professional Skills required include good understanding/appreciation of GAAP, Corporate and Commercial laws/Corporate Risk Management Processes, Treasury/Taxation policy framework, IT systems/processes
- 8-10 years of successful experience
- Experience in leading large teams and Interpersonal/Leadership skills to build effective relationships with colleagues across functions
- Proven track record of information management & finance business partnering roles
- Experience in Governance and Control
- 2-3 years exposure of working in an international environment
- The ability to lead and operate effectively in a complex environment
- Pragmatism and the ability to simplify difficult concepts

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