

Why does Sheikh Hasina now oppose the UN's call for holding a dialogue between her ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP to resolve the ongoing political crisis?

Her stance regarding the UN was different in 2006 when her AL-led alliance resorted to all possible means to stop its rival BNP-led coalition from holding the parliamentary polls scheduled for January 22, 2007. She even sought a UN-mediated election rather than the prospect of the polls under the then caretaker government led by Iajuddin Ahmed, according to US diplomatic cables leaked by WikiLeaks in September 2011.

The then US ambassador to Dhaka Patricia A Butenis in a cable sent to Washington on January 7, 2007 wrote about it. According to the cable, Hasina wrote to the UN Secretary General in December [2006] asking for UN monitoring of the election. "Hasina expressed some interest in a UN mediated election, but it was clear she envisioned an election effectively run by the UN and not just UN mediation of the political issues separating the two major political alliances," the cable added. Butenis, along with the then British high commissioner Anwar Chowdhury, met the AL president the day before.

Everybody knows what happened in early 2007.

But, Hasina, now in power, does not like the UN's call for talks between the feuding AL and BNP. The UN is not alone in advocating for talks as a means to break the political deadlock. The European Union and other foreign countries and a group of country's civil society personalities have already advocated it. The USA has taken a step forward and offered assistance to resolve the ongoing political turmoil.

The Sheikh Hasina led government has however rejected the calls for talks. In her view Bangladesh is capable of resolving its domestic crisis without the help of the foreigners. She and her colleagues in the cabinet and party however have mercilessly blasted

the civil society personalities for their call for talks.

The premier's remarks about Bangladesh's ability to resolve the political crisis has remained rhetorical. The situation has not improved. More than 90 people were killed and 300 others injured during the blockade and hartal enforced by the BNP-led alliance. With the crisis deepening, the call for talks is gaining momentum.

What will PM Sheikh Hasina finally do? Will she remain rigid on her present stance on talks as her government was before the January 5 polls? Before the parliamentary polls in January 2014, the call to resolve the political deadlock and for holding an inclusive election had gained momentum. But Hasina did not bow to the international community's pressure. Her government had moved towards holding the polls amid a boycott by the BNP-led alliance and some other parties.

Billions of eyes are now glued to television screens to enjoy the cricketing extravaganza. When their favourite teams are batting, fans are expecting the batsmen to hit boundaries. The opponents want their bowlers and fielders to take the batsmen out of the crease to stop the wheels of run. We are enjoying cricket even after being sandwiched between the two feuding political camps. A hard hitting batsman cares little about the types of bowler. He loves to play shot. But at one stage, he either becomes tired of hitting the balls or fails to understand the movement of the balls. This brings an end to his

innings. His out sometime appears glorious while sometimes it is humiliating.

In our political battle, there are many players in different teams. There are AL, the BNP, people, students, day labourers, international communities and many more in the field. The prevailing situation however portrays a fierce fight between people who are for and against dialogue. Who will win? And who will win in this game of politics?

The writer is Senior Reporter, The Daily Star.

World XI versus AL?

SHAKHAWAT LITON



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