

A note from diaspora

PIASH KARIM

THOSE of us who take the idea and practice of transformative politics seriously have good reasons to be encouraged by the recent formation of a citizens' group that emerged out of a joint initiative of The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, and Centre for Policy Dialogue.

Yet, simultaneously, one has to keep, again in the memorable language of the great Sardinian, an "optimism of the will" alive. No significant transformation in the right direction is ever possible without this human capacity for hoping against hope.

Civil society represents a decentering of the conventional epicenter of political economy. This "outsidhood," to use Edward Said's expression in a different context, has its distinct advantages.

past, present, and future of our nation are vocalised within this discursive field. But it is also important to understand that, its profoundly significant role as a point of departure notwithstanding, the citizen's group is just that -- a point of departure.

core political-economic apparatuses into radically pluralistic conversational processes. Democracy is not a transhistorical, transcontextual signifier. It is always invariably anchored in specific slices of history, in specific structural contradictions and antagonisms.

Pride and prejudice of Citizens' Group

ABURAD ABDUL AZIZ

MY knowledge level about most of the luminaries of the civil society of Bangladesh, who took a very precious initiative recently by forming a "Citizens' Group" is shallow and newspaper-deep.

"clean candidate"? Is it political cleanliness or financial cleanliness or both. For financial cleanliness there are clear and defined guidelines as law with EC.

wins over a "clean candidate" flexing money muscles and using strings and strengths beyond visual. If "clean candidate" implies "political cleanliness" then my foremost task will be to gauge the political honesty, integrity and bravery of the "Citizens' Group" who will be the ultimate judge to define and sort politically "clean candidates."

Media, civil society and 2007 electionWhat must be done

DELWAR HOSSAIN ARIF

THE conscious citizen of our country appreciates that the media has been playing a vibrant role in strengthening the democratic process. It is also superfluous to reference that one of the basic parameters of democracy is to inform the people and guarantee the participation of people in all spheres of activity.

At the end of the dialogue, a 24-member citizens' group was formed with a prospect to form a vision of advancement. We surely hope that this drive can play a crucial role. But there are some debatable proposition have come out which already spawned an extensive opprobrium amidst the political groups.

honesty. Regardless, the media and civil society should work to make a change to such kind of practices. We can cite the instance of the position of the media and civil society against using arms in the student politics.

Loan defaulters should be barred to run in the election. Those who want to make Bangladesh a Taliban country should be resisted.

MD SADEQU AMIN KHAN FOR an accountable development process we need following steps to be taken: 1. A candidate for member of parliament cannot be shareholder in business organization, because he/she could try to take political influence to profit his/her business organization.

come to power to by utilizing police, army, EC commission staff, money, and hoodlums. Therefore, the reform of EC is justified and must be done from time to time when required with consultation with ruling party and all opposition parties.

fish, vegetables sky-rocketing, daily utility power, gas price out of reach and not available, fertilizer is also expensive and distribution channel already broken down, inflation at the highest level and foreign currency price jumping every day.

bad record will be elected. 7. To elect clean candidates, people should avoid to support any particular political party, but rather vote for clean candidate if even he/she is independent candidate.

Who should be a parliamentarian?

ABM FASHIHUDIN

THE selection of "clean" and patriotic candidate for the national parliament is very difficult, but, not impossible task in our country. A clean person in our consideration may be he who is honest with patriotic feelings, devoid of self interest, dedicated to the overall interest of the country, who is not loan defaulter, land grabber, extortionist and well regarded in the society as an honorable man/woman.

criteria, is a moderate democratic country, embracing politics and religions alike. This is unique in history. The people of four major religions -- Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity are living together with identical rights and aspirations. No clash, nothing, we all are "one," Bangladesh.

for our parliament. Keeping them aside, for obvious reasons, we are nominating candidates like cement traders, fruit dealers, textile millers, contractors, extortionist, musclemen and so on.

With some exceptions, underserving candidates winning the parliamentary elections by their monetary strength an agitating power, contributes little to their people and the country as a whole.

matter and give their best attentions to the selection of deserving candidates for the national parliament. Members should be nominated by the parties should be honest patriotic, endowed with proper education thoughts and philosophies.

Some modest proposals

CM KOYES SAMI

IN previous elections, we have seen that government servants participate in the national elections soon after retirement. With the election in their mind they unduly exercise power to favour their respective constituency and allocate funds for the development of that constituency.

known means of earning should render them liable for disqualification from being a member of parliament. It is also common knowledge that MPs leave behind huge amounts of outstanding telephone/utility bills.

there should be a minimum level of education to qualify him to participate in the elections. The facilities allowed to the MPs at the cost of taxpayer money should also be curtailed to a reasonable level.

Some thoughts on the recently formed Citizens' Group

ASFA HUSSAIN

IT is heartening to see some members from the highest socio-economic class in society of our country to take initiative to bring about changes in the election of public office mainly in the national parliament. This group was formed on March 20, 2006 in the capital, a 24-member citizen's group headed by the CPD chairman Professor Rehman Sobhan with a vision to launch a campaign for honest and competent candidates for the coming general elections was put forth to the citizens.

offered by the civil society sounds good. One would naturally ask if such recommendations given by such societies have actually worked and incorporated in the previous parliaments. If we go by the history of our country and for that matter many other countries of the world all such efforts helped the segment of the upper and elite class taking over power.

sion manipulation and contracts. It is about time the civil society probe deeper and set priorities right. Why are only a few chosen their members? How can they determine that a honest person is the best solution to improve and make the parliament workable?

pendently. This is the time to do something, pages after pages propagated in vernacular news paper which has more circulation in the rural locations in Bangladesh and the electronic media can create this awareness to form pressure groups as 80% of the voters are in the villages. Somehow people like ourselves hardly mention their contribution in actual economy.

It upsets me when we discuss of improving their lot and NGOs are the only fore runners doing so. The private and public sector are gradually contributing to eradicate poverty by creating opportunities in private enterprises. We have come out of Mr Henry Kissinger's "basket case" and very soon I hope we can come out of this if only the electoral process is reformed by having good people who are accountable to the citizens. Transparency in this will bring about all changes in the prescriptions.

parties can start collecting data of these persons, right from their family history to the present standing, most notably their acceptance to the common men and women. This archival finding and acceptance can well eliminate many confusion as regards a "honest candidate" within the parties. The parties have to act responsibly this time.

in governance but of course sharing equity through bonuses, profits and medical benefits with the workers in all private enterprises, factories and in the agriculture can help create equity amongst the work force and better their condition.

and the thoughts that crossed the minds of some well meaning people can we really achieve anything meaningful that will add to the good of the common men? More importantly we can start creating this awareness how to be humane and share social responsibility of our citizens seriously.