

Eradication of corruption

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order that recognises and supports the contributions made by the people at large giving them due recognition, an economic policy that will have provisions for adequate investment in all sectors aimed at removing economic disparities where there will also be provisions for due investments in such sectors like industry, agriculture, infrastructures including electricity, water, gas and also aimed at strengthening and establishing a meaningful and effective local government systems.

We believe that for this what we need is an election process that is free and fair, ensures election of honest and acceptable candidates. Should we be able to make a minimum contribution towards building that awareness amongst the people we shall consider our efforts successful.

Some amongst you have raised the question that while have talked about the responsibility of the politicians but said nothing about responsibility of the government officials. My answer to this would be: in order to establish good governance what we need most are the politicians, ministers, MPs. The terms of reference and the responsibilities of the government officials be duly defined, based on Constitutional provisions. It is my belief that if there were well-defined terms of reference for the politicians and government servants then much of the allegations against them would no longer be there.

Manzurul Haque

From today's discussions it is clear to me that the prevailing injustices today are deeply rooted and we are looking for good men to help us come out of this scourge. What we need to do is to find out a person to stand up as a candidate. My question is why this frustration, surely there are good people within the civil society? The truth is, the civil society itself is divided into two or three groups. People do not have the intelligence of identifying from amongst the civil society those who are neutral.

An MP's jurisdictions extend only to formation of laws. At the same time this very MP is using his influence in the society for his personal gains. On the other hand the government itself, through official circulars, is allocating wheat for distribution including funds for flood rehabilitation to these very MPs. As a matter of fact it is the state machinery, which is creating the ground for them to indulge in corruption.

We have to work through the political parties to meet all our objectives yet there is little trust in the people themselves so we have no other alternative but to depend on political parties to determine the future of our country. Most of our people are poor and lack education and therefore the politicians operate the way they please.

It is my belief that the only way to bring about a change in our political culture is to bring about a political awareness amongst the people.

Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya

I have in my hand a written statement from Anandadas Zohoor; let me read it out to "you have talked about the need for individual courage in respect of accountability. I believe that our politicians do possess that courage and hence they are able to face the people time and again to get elected more than once. Dr. Younus, Chairman of the Grameen Group collected deposits/securities worth 5 to ten lakh takas in 2001 to expand the operations of his organisation all over the country, where as Michael Computer of Jessore could not obtain an agency even after he had deposited a sum of taka 5 lakhs. On the other hand he has not received his money back in full as yet. Who would answer to this question?" I am giving you my word that I shall reach this letter to Dr. Younus

Habiba Sefat

It is difficult to establish this accountability without recourse to elections. In past years we have observed the sprawling of prices, in religious fundamentalism and terrorist acts and yet we continue to work for the politicians during the elections. We now need to seriously consider as to whom should we vote for and elect. On behalf of the Mahila Parishad and the women community at large I wish to point out that half of Bangladesh's population consists of women. The voter ratio is about the same. Based on that we had demanded direct elections for the reserved seats and yet the seats have been filled through nominations based on partisan considerations. We want equal participatory rights for women in the political process right from the grass root level. Because of a number of private channels we find that women are being beaten up by the police since the political leaders are pushing them up to be in front lines of protest marches. Where as when nomination is sought they are ignored. The reason for this is that women do not have either muscle power or the required financial backing. A woman is born poor and does not have access to black money and hence she is not capable of contesting elections. I am appealing to all the political parties that each of them gives nominations to at least 30 women. It is my firm belief that it the women who can lay the foundations of an efficient and an honest administration. Question however may arise as to why are we asking for more when both our PM and the leader of the opposition are women? The answer to this is that they are merely representing their parties where as the real power lies in the hands of men.

Bimal Chandra Roy Chowdhury

When we gained independence in 1971 through the War of Liberation the population of Bangladesh were seven and half cores. They were neither Hindus, nor Muslims, nor even Christians they were all known as Bengalis. We now have reached a stage that it has given rise to many questions in the minds of the people of today. I do not wish to go into that. All I wish to say is that the Enemy Property Act could have been scrapped by the then Bangladesh Government way back in 1972, but it was not done. Later many other provisions have been added in Bengali changing the word "Enemy" in 1982 however, a civic resistance committee was created to stop acquisition of the so-called enemy property. As you can see the root cause for creation of such can be traced back to 1972. This ultimately compelled us to form the Puja Parishad subsequently Bangladesh Hindu, Boudha, Christian Parishad. Being a freedom fighter, although I am connected with this organisation, but as an individual I do not personally like to be associated with the organisation. On the other hand we have seen that things are not decided on the basis of merit. The Government previous did not have a single one as cabinet minister.

Since we are described as belonging to the minority community hence in the future nominations we wish to see that the Hindus, the Christians and the Buddhists are duly represented in the Cabinet.

Mujtaba Shamim

In April we had organised a discussion session on "In search of honest men". How can you define a good man in this country when the security money of a man like Dr. Kamal Hoasin was confiscated?

Dr. Sanjay Pathak

Today any one who heads an organisation and a state having huge resources we call the individual or the state as developed. My question is if a person, or a state, who has acquired wealth and resources by whatever means is recognized in the world as developed, then why should a person strive to be honest?

Shimul Azad

I lead an educational cum cultural outfit here. Yet despite having acquired high education I could not get a good government job. I am on way of being age-barred. Under the circumstances what good can I hope from this country? I am a political worker, whatever little respect and devotion I had I have already lost it. What you call accountable development program, is it a part of the democratic process? We believe that democracy is governance by the illiterate and there is no room for educational competence?

Janab Abul Hossain

May I ask, will it be ever possible for us to find an honest and competent candidate? I do not believe so. If the political parties themselves are not honest it will never be possible to field an honest candidate. On the other hand we the left leaning on our part have been extremely vocal against corruption, grafts and poverty for long, but we find that you have not cared to praise or recognise our efforts.

Panna Lal Dey

My question is if all of us agree with the propositions put forward by CPD then why things continue to be still so complicated? Our appeal would be that each one of us should work towards realisation of CPD's proposals from wherever we may be.

Gulnahr Begum

Different political parties are supplying weapons to the members of their respective student organisations. How can any one expect to see an honest politician in the future? I am appealing to all political parties to desist from this practice.



Harroonur Rashid

There is a popular saying that people are the source of all power but is it really true? We have often seen a candidate nominated by a political party presents himself as a people's representatives during the elections. Then once elected he becomes a member of the party having no connections with the electorate. This situation has to change and that change should be done through pressures brought upon by donor agencies. In recent times it has become a culture amongst our lawmakers particularly those belonging to the Opposition to abstain from working sessions of the Parliament despite the fact that they continue to enjoy all the perks and benefits provided by the state. There should be a specific law against this practice like possible cancellation of one's Parliamentary Membership.

Prof. Masudul Huq

Effective steps have to be taken to eradicate corruption from all sections of the society. But this may not be possible if we are unable to make political parties to stand by the resolutions we have reached here. After all, it is the political parties who will be nominating the candidates. The entire civil society has to take the initiative in this regard.

Dr. Debapriya Bhattacharya

I can assure that in addition to us there are a number of other organisations at grass root levels that are working on various issues relating to election. We are working on issues of principles. We shall also make every effort to reach your suggestions to the highest level of the political parties.

Elahi Dad Khan

Through the discussions held so far, CPD has provided us with the "vision" of Bangladesh for the year 2021. But what remains to be elucidated is to how to achieve the stated goals. Since no one can be free from some imposed rules of procedures and restrictions, therefore there should be mandatory formulae. Bangladesh has already provided the lawmakers with those parameters. The people should place before the local government their problems and they will implement them and subsequently this will strengthen the local governments. The MPS should be engaged only in formulating laws through the Parliament. I think it is not appropriate that the lawmakers will formulate laws and at the same time be involved in implementations of the development programmes; CPD has placed before us a formula of election through full participation of the people. While the political parties will place their candidates before the people and they in turn scrutinise the list of candidates and in turn select the candidates they think are most deserving. This is the only way we can hope to see a parliament that is based on honesty of purpose. Candidates elected during the past years did not keep their promises to the people, on the contrary, in respect of some of the vital issues like separation of the Judiciary from the Executive, they have expressed their reluctance to implement, where as, in respect of liberalisation of the state media, they have either simply declined to do so or have said that it would "take time"

Advocate Abdus Shahid

The 54 Huq-Bhashani-Suhwardy Coalition won '54 elections based on the 21 point agenda presented to the electorate. Any one nominated under this banner would have been elected. Similarly the '70 election had the backing of Bangabandhu's Six Points and 11 points presented by the seven party coalitions. Similarly the candidates were elected without recourse to spending any money as such. The other parallel example we can cite is the result of the recently held elections in West Bengal. The lesson we can take from this is, given a proper manifesto backed by serious commitment one need not spend crores to get elected. What is needed is a firm democratic culture within the political parties. If you ask some one on any critical issue he or she says that their Netri knows it, similarly a BNPTite says "our Netri" knows the answer. If the culture of democracy is practiced within the parties a democratic environment will automatically follow. Black money then cannot come into play. In 1970 only seven businessmen were elected to the Parliament. It will be the responsibility of the civil society to ensure that the hands of the spirit of the War of Liberation is upheld and the hands of those who believe in the spirit of liberation are strengthened and give their special



attention so that more and more individuals representing various professional groups come forward and contest elections.

Advocate Kazi Munirul Huda

Today's organisers wish the people to dream of a happy and prosperous country. But the way they are going about it they cannot succeed in their objectives. The system is ingrained here in such way that even if an honest candidate is elected and sent to the Parliament he or she can no longer remain honest. Hence your proposals tantamount to turning an honest person into a dishonest one. 35 years ago we gained our independence aimed at establishing a democratic state. But have we achieved our goal? Today's organisers have raised a vital question, that the people of the country wish to know the truth about their rights and what should their role be. There are considerable pressures on the country by foreign capitalists who are taking millions out of the country. You are appreciative of your initiative, but we are yet to see any detailed news covering this aspect in the dailies. It is they who are responsible for destroying our national economy.

Amirul Alam Khan

To begin with I am in agreement with Munirul Huda with regard to his observation of flight of our resources from the country and the inadequate role played by our media to put a check to it. I also agree with him that it is the politicians who have to undertake the responsibility of building an environment for honest people in the society. In the entire process of building awareness we shall have to turn our attention to "Education". This country has more private universities than primary schools. It does not appear logical to me to have so many universities, where as, there is only

one primary school against a thousand. So long as we are unable to ensure primary education no awareness can be built in the society. Whichever party goes to power must have commitment in its election agenda like education for all within its tenure of office, and that the program is implemented region-wise. There should be provisions for punitive measures against those who fail to keep their commitments based on individual performance. Since all the major political parties have betrayed our trust it is the Caretaker Government who has to undertake the responsibility of separating the Judiciary from the Executive. Similarly the ACC also has to be free and independent. Since the political parties are unable to agree on the issue of how to curb corruption it is again the Caretaker government that has to undertake necessary measures in this matter. The civil society can only act as a pressure group and not more.

Prof. Najmus Saadat

Today corruption is widespread in the parliamentary systems all over the world. According to the Transparency International the parliament and the judiciary are listed as number 1 and 3 respectively amongst the most corrupt institutions. Our country is enveloped in corruption, however we are all trying our best to do all we can. Whether we are successful in our endeavour or not, only time shall tell. However we welcome the imitative undertaken by this forum. So long CPD's activities were in and around the capital, but we are now happy to see it has also come to the villages too.

Sheikh Hassan Imam

It was my earnest desire to be acquainted with activities of CPD right from the start of its work. Those who are present here need no introduction you already know them through their writings and the TV and through his very forum

The forum has talked about good governance and accountability. The

simply robbery and our state machinery is responsible for it. I believe that in order to materialise the vision we need to change the present system of the state management including reforming of the constitutional provisions including administrative and political systems. We also need to create a secular environment in the society.

Sayeduzzaman

I wish to refer to the previous speaker who said it was I who paved the way for turning black money into white while the Finance Minister. It is not true. I was Minister for Finance from December 1984 through 1987. General Ershad came to power in 1982 and it was he who created the opportunity to turn black money into white.

Advocate Enamul Haque

I have come here most reluctantly directed by leader Muzaffar Ahmad. I wonder from where these civil society representatives came? In my 40 years of experience in politics I have seen that a political party generally merges based on its prevailing economic conditions. I believe those who are representing the civil society here today have gathered supporting the current economic order. Dr. Barua knows that a political party of the country is based on its economic framework. Today they are of the opinion that the various prescriptions provided by IMF, World Bank and other forums, which virtually are running the affairs of the country. They are simply misleading the people. You will find much more high sounding words in party manifestoes. Looks like he has not read it. You see there is Mr. Sayeeduzzaman. He was a minister in Ershad's cabinet. Then we had plenty of money and fake elections.

Dr. Kazi Rabiul Haque

We are tired of discussing; I would like to raise three specific issues only.



questing is who is to be accountable and to whom? We need bureaucrats to run the government. While the bureaucrats will be responsible to their superior and they in turn be answerable to the political leaders then to the respective ministers, but if these bureaucrats are employed on partisan political considerations then the politicians lose all capacities to control them. When that happens these bureaucrats become isolated from the mainstream public and the politicians resulting into disastrous consequences like what happened in Kansat, Narayanganj and Sahnir Akhra. While IMF, World Bank and Asian Development Bank are providing us funds it must be remembered that a child who is born today carries with him or her debt burden of 3000 dollars. On the other hand what the multinational companies are giving with their right hand are being taken away with their left hand. Let me now dwell on the issue of corruption. Corruption is universal, but in other countries it is carried out with some restraint and with a feeling of shame and guilt, but here in Bangladesh it has crossed all boundaries in everyday. Only 15 percent of us live in the comforts of a good house, eat and dress well but this does not mean that we all always be in this safe haven. None of us will be safe until measures are taken on a more permanent basis to eradicate the prevailing inequality and injustice. In order to bring to justice the corrupt people including those who are elected to the parliament we had seen the emergence of the Anti Corruption Commission formerly known as the Anticorruption Bureau. This organisation has been made inoperative. We must stop the responsible. With regard to black or illegal money I wish to refer to an example as to how the neighbouring country is trying to regulate rising incidences of corruption. There one has to fill in a special deposit form even for sum of taka 25000 indicating the source of acquisition. Constitution is the symbol of people's aspirations and an instrument for protection of individual's civil rights. Judiciary has been described as the highest social order and justice in any society. The very judiciary has been desecrated through extra judicial killings. Justice Habibur Rahman made an important observation that, what is of greater concern is that even the educated section of the community has endorsed the murders. No people's management per say is administered by individuals, it is managed through a "system" In 2021 I wish to see a Bangladesh where one can stand erect with head high as a human being where there will be no need for foreigners to come and resolve our disputes and interfere in the management of our people, a country that no longer stretches its hands asking for gratis from outside sources, where women will have full security of their lives, a manpower that are educated and empowered.

Ekramdowla

Today, because of a few corrupt political leaders, people have lost confidence in the community of politicians as a whole. Because of the failure of our elected representative to keep their promises to the people, we have seen the emergence of such people's unrest like in Kansat and Shanir Akhra.

Institutions for curbing the rise of black money already exist but they are not effective since they are not allowed to exercise their responsibilities freely. We have to identify those who stand in their way. Once that is done, the individuals planning to amass money through illegal means will automatically refrain from doing so. We have to imbibe in the people the spirit of our War of Liberation. Once we are able to revive the Constitution of 1972 the issues raised in clause 3/A will automatically cease to exist.

Rabiul Alam

If we carefully analyse the manifestoes of the various political parties we shall find that many of the points raised in the Bangladesh vision 2021 document already exist in the said manifestoes. The civil society representatives present here today has the questions once again considering the continued suffering that the entire civil society is still undergoing. We find that Mr. Sayeeduzzaman was once a Finance Minister some twenty years ago and he too made way for amassing illegal wealth and black money.

We need to modernise the National Board of Revenue and the entire taxation system so that we are able to put a halt to black money. There is hardly any effective system in place to punish even known black money holders.

The way businesses are conducted here can well be described as looting. On the other hand taking is also a form of looting. On the other hand the corruption by the politicians that too is looting. The private mobile companies are making profits ranging between 1400 and 1600 percent; it is

First, democracy in Bangladesh. The core issue behind our independence was establishing a democratic form of administration with its character based on the principle of secularism where each will have right to practice his her religion under one state. But history tells us that democracy in the country was short-lived. It was only since 1990 that changes in the government was through parliamentary system of elections. Prior to that changes were effected through murders. Therefore our democracy is essentially only 15 years old. Democracy is not confined to changing guards in the government alone but establishing a democratic culture in the tiers of the society. That is why the question has come up as to what role the civil society should play. Two specific issues have surfaced concerning the forthcoming elections, first a transparent process of conducting elections that are being conducted by various political parties and then electing honest and capable candidates for which the civil society is working; a part of that process is this discussion session organized by CPD. The civil society should look for honest candidates in collaboration and understanding reached with respective political parties. We should also strive to bring about a democratic culture within the political parties. Each party has its own constitution including rules of procedures for running the party. With malice towards none may I ask as to how many of you present here representing various political parties have read the your respective party's constitution. I believe there are few since you can hardly lay your hands on a party's constitution even after considerable efforts. It is important to have access to these constitutions in order for the people to know that the nominations are based on respective party's constitutional provisions. There should be a legal provision to take actions against those who violate the process. If one can be prosecuted for violating the provisions of the constitution of the country then why not when constitution of a political party is violated? While the civil society will present the political parties will be responsible for translating that vision into reality. There are many issues, which have merged here; I wish to say that it will take more hard for dreams to materialise all those. While agreeing with all of the points I believe in achieving those targets the first and foremost is to create a proactive awareness amongst the people across the country.

Shaikh Siraj

I wish to talk about agriculture, the farmers and management of the agriculture sector. I have been working in the agriculture sector for he last twenty years and it is my belief that we cannot move forward without development of agriculture and the farmers. We all are sons of the farmers. My grandfather and the generation before him were all farmers. I am certain many of you come from the same background. The population of Bangladesh was 7 crores in 1971 and today it is 14 crores. Today we are meeting food requirements from the food grains produced within the country. It is sad that many of us undermine that achievement. Working with television I believe that the media is capable moving the people ahead towards progress. I have seen if we can motivate people many of them get interested in investing in agriculture. A classic example is the poultry farms. There are one lakh poultry farms in the country today and over 50 percent of those are owned by once jobless young people. I believe if we are able to change the fate of the people at the grass root level only then we can dream of a prosperous Bangladesh. A question has been raised here in this platform about our honesty of purpose explanation to which has already been provided by Dr. Deavapriya Bahtacharya. Let me say this, had we not been honest we would not be able to stand before you.

Shah Hadiuzzaman

We are a free sovereign country. But are we really so? Mr. Sadequee a Bangladeshi American comes for a visit to Bangladesh and American police comes, arrests him and whisks him away from the country. There is no extradition treaty between Bangladesh and USA. If that is the case one wonders as to how the killers of Bangabandhu are roaming freely in USA, Canada and India?

Aninda Islam Amit

A considerable controversy exists today with regard to the initiatives undertaken by the Nagorik Committee. I believe one way to effectively dispel that would be for CPD and many of you, who maintain a cordial