

Civil Society Initiative for Accountable Development

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that they are highly conservative. There are 511 mosques in my area. When the Imams of the mosques, after the Jumma prayers address the audiences saying that unless you vote for such and such candidate the country will go to the dogs then where do you stand? All the teachers and students of schools and colleges represent one political party or the other. Every presiding officer is a college teacher, and belongs to one party or another. We have to address this also.

Dr. Moshleuddin Ahmed

There is a need for transparency in expenditures. This wastage of government funds should be stopped. I fail to understand why the politicians are hesitating to do so? Alternatively, why not distribute the responsibilities amongst yourselves, the various responsibilities entrusted, from the Secretary to the Deputy Commissioner. Only the public representatives are able to understand the dimensions of these problems. No matter how uncooperative a public representative may be, he would not be able to ignore these responsibilities and has to remain accountable for his actions to the people. I do not understand why the Election Commission cannot prepare a credible voter list? Surely you can find an independent man in this country. I am highly concerned. If a voter list is not prepared how can the election in 2007 be held?

Abul Hasnat Babul

Once the print media was blamed for the rise of religious terrorism but finally the media was proved to be right. The 20-point draft agenda should also receive due coverage both in the electronic and the print media.

Advocate Afzal Khan

Although your venture is praiseworthy, it will not be wise for you to appear as an adversary of the politicians. Black money, terrorism and indiscipline are everywhere. If we can find out how much money a candidate spent in an election and the number of industries that he has built once he was out of office, then we should be able to stop this scourge of black money and at the same time terrorism will come to an end. The matter of religious extremism has another dimension. The government is encouraging it in order to be able to cling to power.

Mafizuddin Ahmed

Today we have come here to listen to you and to assess whether or not on principle the tactical position and the process you have adopted is the right one? If found in order we shall stand beside you and lend you our support and we will join hands with you, working for the welfare of the people of this country. I would also like to take this opportunity of informing you that the 53-point agenda presented by my party also include your 21 points.

Kazi Najmus Saadat

People are the source of all power, and 80 percent of our population live in villages. They are not aware of the duties and responsibilities of the public representative due to the fact that this matter is not included in the textbooks. You have talked about honest and capable candidates but you have not given a clear definition as to who is honest and capable.

A. K. M. Bahauddin Bahar

Dr. Debapriya in his introductory speech has spoken of our history from 1990. In fact our history goes beyond the 90s. We as a nation had a leader under whose direction we fought the liberation war. He speaks about development. Whose development is he talking about, those who have a thousand crores or one who does not have a single taka? We did not attain freedom to see this kind of development. There are more holders of black money apart from those who are contesting election. Time has come to identify them too. The political leaders have not only plundered our wealth but also all our achievements. It is the non-political activities of our leaders that have created a band of looter in the garb of traders.

A. K. M. Mafizur Rahman

I have a book with me published by the National Democratic Institute containing detailed bio-data of the 300 MPs of our National Assembly containing such details as individual educational qualifications and corresponding professions. I would thus request you to fix some criteria on the educational qualification for the MPs.

Shafiqul Islam Shikder

I have come here to throw a challenge to CPD. Instead of taking the trouble of going from village to village looking for honest persons why don't you go to a few strategic centers which will be ultimately nominating these candidates like the 14 Party Alliance, and the Four Party Alliance who have their respective parliamentary boards. It is time find out as to who actually determines an honest candidate. For example today, when a school



teacher puts up his candidature he gets a bare 116 votes and his security money is confiscated, where as, a black money holder buys his nomination and wins the election with a huge margin of votes.

Gholam Farooq

No matter how many laws you may frame, political parties will not refrain from nominating black money holders. You have to suggest definitively where the fault lies and think of effective ways and means so that no black money can be used in the election.

Debapriya Bhattacharya

He has talked about suggesting specific ways, about legal process, but the problem is, Bangladesh has adequate laws but these are not being implemented. We believe that had there been an election commission capable of being absolutely independent and strong then we could bring about a qualitative change in the present situation. Unfortunately this is not possible at this stage, so we have to seriously work towards implementing the existing laws alongside framing of additional laws

Advocate Syed Abdullah Pinto

During the Pak regime I was the President of the Comilla District East Pakistan Student's League and later took part in the War of Liberation. Our young people are speaking out in a distinct voice and that is why I have given my introduction. I wish to tell the young people that the entire nation is looking to you to come forward. You have given us a 21-point agenda to which I would like to add-our gas is not for sale to anyone else.

Jamilur Reza Chowdhury

The civil society has various roles to play. I am attached with only one that relates to creating a pressure group so that the Administration is compelled to implement the recommendations. It is because of this you are able to see some successes in the areas of environment and technology. You may have come across a gazette notification where there is a notification on the Building Code with which I was directly involved. This was a pending issue with the Government for years and has finally been made into a law due to the pressures of the civil society. Therefore the accusation that the civil society is simply making deliberations sitting on an ivory tower is not true. They also work as activists. In 1991 Prof. Rehamn Sobhan along with a group 250 professional prepared a series of recommendations in four volumes. Although the Government may or may not give them an official recognition but the fact remains that a number of recommendations were in fact implemented. We are here to have a draft an outline that we will finally make into a final document. When the question of the voter list first came up in 1995 I was invited by the Election commission to discuss about the introduction of the voter ID cards but later, unfortunately instead of implementing our recommendation the election in 1996 was held without voter ID cards. Similarly a move was made with regard to preparation of a voter database in the year 2000. It is now being revealed that that a voter database does exist and was prepared with the assistance UNDP and the relevant diskettes are available, but instead of updating them a fresh controversy has now been created. Working over the past several years we have put up draft known as the "Freedom of Information Act." In Bangladesh we have what is known as Official Secrets Act under which no civil servant is obliged to provide any information to the members of the public. But this act should be revised.

Debapriya Bhattacharya

We have one more proposal that has not been discussed here. We wish to propose that all expenditures of elections be borne by the government.

Muhammad Mafizuddin Bhuiyan

I have two questions: first a list of terrorists should be prepared and made public. Second even after 35 years of independence we are still indulging in the malpractice of distributing and selling freedom fighter certificates;

when will this come to an end?

Muhammad Ali Murtaza Masud

The bourgeois parties of Bangladesh do not follow any rules of procedures. CPD should therefore conduct its dialogue only with the four major political parties like BNP, Jamat Islami, Awami League and Jatiyo Party. Let us see as to what these parties have to say. If these parties are willing to stand by the recommendations of CPD then we can be sure they would abide by their commitments.

Arif Ibn Atiq

We have come to know that there are unpaid bills amounting to lakhs against our Mps. Likewise gas bills have also not been settled by many of our lawmakers including ministers. It is our appeal that all these defaulters are not given any nomination. We find that there is no mention about drug addiction and drug free Bangladesh in you 21point agenda. Kindly include this point.

Abdul Quayyum

If we are able to create awareness amongst the people only then we shall be able to bring about pressures on the parties to give nominations to honest people. Prothomo Alo is always associated with any good venture, thus we are also with CPD. Besides, I am sure you are aware of the fact that we are also providing support for treatment and rehabilitation of the acid victims. Besides, we have also conducted an Olympiad on mathematics in the media. We began working for this Daily with a firm commitment to the society. We have always upheld the viewpoints of the common people, independent of any party affiliation.

Prof. Ameer Ali Chowdhury

Dr. Debapriya set three standards for candidates contesting election 2007: these are honesty, competency and one who is a staunch believer in principles. We need courageous people who will not hesitate to speak out the truth no matter how bitter it may be, only then can we check the temptation of being a minister. We embark on our task starting with the Election Commission. If this is not done we shall not succeed in our objective even after nominating honest candidates. We have many things to say and we needed a platform, CPD provided us that platform and I thank CPD on behalf of the people of Comilla.

