

End confrontational politics

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education and medical services. In the sphere of good governance we have emphasised on the need for an administration free from any partisan influence.

On the other hand, keeping in view the forthcoming election, we have said a few things. We want an independent election commission. We shall go and meet the politicians

with our "vision" document and tell them that we want honest candidates. We believe that corruption and other related problems that exist today are largely interconnected with the individual candidate's proficiency and competency. At the same time we also think that there is need for carrying out reforms of the election commission and the caretaker form of government. The way the

DIALOGUE'S RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF

Election Commission

1. The Chief Election Commissioner should voluntarily step down after making necessary reforms.
2. Recruitment of officials for the Election Commission should be made through the PSC.
3. The Election Commission should be made strong enough so that we have no need for Caretaker Government.
4. A selection committee should be formed, involving the political parties, which will appoint the Chief Election Commissioner and the Commissioners.
5. The number of the Commissioners should be fixed.

ELECTION AND CANDIDATURE

1. A winning candidate receiving less than 50 percent of the votes will not be declared elected. In this instance a fresh election should take place between the second and the third position holders.
2. While casting vote, should a voter not find a candidate of his or her choice he or she should have the option of casting a "no" vote on the ballot paper.
3. The minimum academic education qualification of a candidate should be a graduate degree.
4. The Election Commission has to ensure the correctness of information provided by a candidate at the time of filing his or her nomination.
5. A contesting candidate has to be a registered voter of the constituency.
6. People who had been contesting elections at grass root levels, or given political leadership, should be given preference at the time of giving nominations for the Parliamentary Elections.
7. Candidates losing elections twice consecutively should be barred from contesting in the future.
8. No one should be allowed to be Prime Minister for more than two terms.
9. Any candidate switching over to another party should not be allowed to contest the next election.
10. In the case of a participating candidate the age limit should be fixed at 65.
11. Arrangements have to be made for meeting expenses of election campaign by the State.

PARLIAMENT AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

1. The tenure of the Parliament should be reduced to four years.
2. In order to make the Parliament effective, the appointment of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker have to be absolutely neutral and transparent.
3. The women's seats in the Parliament should be filled through direct elections.
4. The provision of the existing limit of 90 days on abstention from the Parliament should be reduced to 60 days.
5. The MPs should be engaged only in framing laws, and not in development activities.
6. If any MP loses the confidence of the people of his / her locality, a fresh election should be held (through a re-call system).
7. MPs acquiring duty free cars must use the vehicles themselves.
8. MPs have to provide, on a yearly basis, a description of their activities to the people of their respective constituencies.



election commission is functioning at present we are all the more doubtful if it is at all capable of conducting a fair or free election. We have been to NBR and the election commission so that they become a little more active in putting forward the individual voter profiles for the benefit of the public. We shall also try to discuss matters with the politicians but to what extent that would be possible is to be seen. It appears as though there are still doubts about us, and we are looked upon as an insignificant entity. We shall go to the politicians, not to accuse them but to urge upon them to present their election pledges to the public in clear terms.

Lakshmi Kant Singh
The indigenous people of our plains are deprived in many ways. I

demand that there be clear commitment for the indigenous people in the election manifesto. There are many facilities for the indigenous peoples of the Hill Tracts but there is hardly any for us. We shall welcome it if CPD organises a dialogue on the indigenous people.

Hafiz Ahmad Majumder
We need to elect capable candidates, but no one is able to give us a description of a capable candidate. We lack competent candidates in many constituencies; this vacuum will be filled in by and by. Competent and educated people will gradually enter the political arena. I am in full agreement with you on the point of fixing an age limit for the Parliamentary Members. It is you who

elect the MPs. You entrust them with the responsibilities as your representatives and not as your guardians. You wish to see them play the role of lawmakers and at the same time you expect them to do everything. I request you to carefully go through the role of the MPs as provided for in the constitution. If the local governments are strengthened, the burden on the shoulders of the MPs will be largely reduced. Therefore the local governments have to be empowered. All the parties have rejected the election commission. We shall be able to hold a credible election if all the parties, combined together, can set up an election commission. If the Parliament is to be effective both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker have to be independent and neutral.

M. A. Haque
We have to think not only about competent candidates but also keep an eye on the framework of the election process. Many of us have talked about the voter list, but I say that there should be voter ID cards, too, with the individual's photograph. We have experienced that those who are not competent have often influenced elections with their money and muscle power. It is therefore important to have voter ID cards. Had the move, taken during 1994/95 been implemented in this regard, there would have been no need for such a movement today. Most of the speakers here have said that the MPs are corrupt and holders of black money. I do not agree

with them. We started with very little after independence and yet the country marched ahead and we made good progress. Ministers and the MPs are formulating laws, sitting inside the parliament, that in turn are implemented by the Government. If those responsible for implementation are dishonest then there is no point in such a movement. You have to bring to justice all who are corrupt.

Prof. Md. Abdul Aziz

Voter ID cards are essential in order to hold a credible election because without ID cards you cannot stop casting of false votes. In order to hold a fair election you have to resist the use of muscle power. There is also this other issue of candidates not keeping their promises made prior to their being elected, and abandoning us once elected. I believe that the time has come for a change in our constitution. If a system of re-call

is introduced we shall be able to ensure accountability.

If this is introduced the public representatives would be a little more conscious and responsible. On the other hand, if we are able to bring some of those honest and patriotic people, who are not involved in politics, into Parliament it will also bring about a healthy balance. With regard to deployment of our armed forces during election I wish to say that under no circumstances they should be involved in the election itself, they should not be allowed to go to the polling centers. Political instability is hindering our pace of development. We have involved the bureaucracy in partisan politics. They are also corrupt. If we are able to free bureaucracy from partisanship, we may then be able to create a ground for accountability.

VOTERS AND THE VOTER LIST

1. Photographs of individual voters should be attached with the voter list.
2. Individual voter ID cards should contain the signature and photograph of the voter.
3. The current voter list has to be updated on the basis of the previous voter list.
4. If the voter list is faulty then those responsible for preparing the voter list should be penalised.
5. Voter list should be prepared by the Caretaker Government after due extension of tenure of its office.
6. Names of the non-resident Bangladeshis have to be included in the voter list.
7. Electronic system of voting has to be introduced.

POLITICAL PARTIES

1. Registration of the political parties has to be mandatory.
2. No one should be allowed to head a political party consecutively for more than three times.
3. The same person cannot be the Head of the Government and leader of party at the same time.

ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION

1. Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) has to be given absolute freedom of action.
2. Appointment of officials for the ACC should be done through the PSC.

THE CIVIL SOCIETY

1. People of the villages have to be informed of this entire initiative by the civil society.
2. The civil society should undertake a dialogue with the leading political parties (at least with the two big parties).
3. In the aspiration document of the civil society the word "capable" should be replaced by "hardworking, meritorious and patriotic."
4. Similarly the words "religious minority" should be replaced by "irrespective of religion, color and creed."
5. It has to be ensured that those participating in today's dialogue of the civil society are regular taxpayers and not holders of black money.
6. The civil society should carry on with such dialogues at other times also and not just before the election.