



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.



Caretaker government

Our leaders and Electoral reform



Almost all our political leaders are well established and rich. They own mills, factories, industries, companies, firms, palatial buildings, beautiful cars, big bank deposits, luxurious drawing rooms, and what not! They visit foreign countries on pleasure trips and for medical check-up. They lacerate and criticise their opponents black and blue. There is no accountability and transparency of their activities and sources of income.

They spend crores of taka during election, sympathise with the members of public for their manifold problems and sufferings, make promises and give assurances for removal of their grievances and hardship. The political leaders go door-to-door for votes.

Once elected as member of the union council, ward commissioner, mayor, MP or appointed as minister they are totally changed persons, they consider themselves super men/women, and suffer from superiority complex, hate to meet the members of public, keep themselves busy in attending receptions, conferences, state functions and visiting foreign countries. They do not have time to grant interview to people to discuss their problems.

But if they are defeated in the election they blame and criticise their opponents for malpractice, irregularities and vote rigging. They give hartal calls!

These are the common scenes in our country, no matter which political leader or political party wins the election or which party comes to power.

On the eve of the general elections 2007, many of our political leaders are asking for appointment of a new Chief Election Commissioner and reform to the caretaker government system.

We would request all concerned including the 4-party alliance government led by BNP Chairperson Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, 14-party alliance led by Opposition leader and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, Gano Forum leader Dr Kamal Hossain and Bikalpa Dhara leader Dr. Badruddoza Chowdhury to discuss the issues and arrive at a consensus in the greater interest of the country.

OH Kabir, Wari, Dhaka

We can't forget the despicable attitude of

the policy-makers towards the power starved people. People were "outraged by outage", but to our utter disappointment, the message didn't reach the prime minister. She is busy making a political strategy for the next general elections. The energy crisis could not convince the government that it had to do something to boost power generation. So, there has been agitation and violence across the country.

The present government didn't take a single step to set up any new power generation plant. Rather, they increased the number of consumers in an unplanned way. When all this was happening, police pounced on general people.

This is not how an important sector can be run.

K Hasan, Jalalabad, Sylhet

The nation is heaving a sigh of relief at the progress and prospect of a dialogue between the BNP and the AL. However, one cannot feel comfortable listening to the interview of the Jamaat Secretary General with the BBC Bengali service. In my judgement, his comments are enough to create a deadlock in the proposed and agreed dialogue between the BNP and the AL. If the Jamaat is considered a major political party and force in Bangladesh, why can't the Jamaat fight election on their own? Let us see how much popularity the Jamaat is enjoying. I think it is high time to test the popularity of the Jamaat both in the interest of the BNP and the Jamaat.

By the way, I would be interested to see the election manifesto of the Jamaat if they have one.

A Reader, On e-mail

I feel sorry for the common people of Bangladesh, the way they are duped by the ruling class (BNP or AL). The power crisis has been going on for more than a decade. Neither party has done anything to alleviate the problem. And both claim to be working hard for the common people.

Shame on these leaders! What a pathetic picture of Sonar Bangla we have now!

It is time to remove these so-called politicians and have a new leadership to lead the country out of its misery.

Javed Iqbal, New York, USA

If the Awami League is confident of winning the elections, it may reform the caretaker government system and the Election Commission as per its wishes after coming to power.

But it cannot create a political crisis in the country on the plea of reforming the caretaker government system and the Election Commission before the next general elections.

SN Hossain, Uttara, Dhaka

The BNP government is about to hand over power to a neutral (?) caretaker government. We have been told all along that the caretaker government has no authority but to conduct a fair and free election. I am pleased and hopeful to hear what Dr. Yunus and others are saying about the authority of caretaker government. The caretaker government must make necessary electoral reform and revise election rules to make the upcoming election a meaningful exercise of democracy. The inept Election Commission or the ruling party, for that matter, will do nothing.

Once the caretaker government gets down to the business of making these needed electoral reform and update the election rules, I would request them to make another change to the election laws that no one talks about. In Bangladesh one is allowed to run for Member of Parliament from more than one constituency. Some of our politicians actually contest from as many as four or five constituencies. Needless to say, almost all of these politicians live full time in Dhaka and have nothing to do with these constituencies until election time. They do not have any residence in many of these constituencies, nor do they have anything to do with the lives of the people they claim to represent.

Is this what the framers of the Constitution had in mind? This joke in the name of democracy should be stopped.

Siraj Haque, Houston, Texas, USA

Power generation scenario

The recent violent agitation has shown how frustrated people are with shortage of electricity. While we should vehemently denounce any violent forms of protest, we should learn from this that people are desperate to act that way. We have had problems with our power supply for many years. The new government came with

lots of hefty promises but at the end of every government's tenure, we find ourselves in the same gridlock.

There are many problems in the power sector in Bangladesh. But according to reports, we have a good reserve of natural gas. Why not use this natural gas to produce electricity? Many international

energy companies might be interested in these sorts of projects if proper incentives are given.

I think the government should hire an international consulting firm to explore this idea.

Maksood Mohiuddin

On e-mail

Emphasis on spoken English

Compared to our neighbouring country India, we are lagging far behind in the field of spoken English.

I think our education ministry can play a vital role in making our students well equipped in this field. They should introduce a new subject "Spoken English" in which each & every student must get an acceptable mark. That subject should be compulsory for all. If it is done, all students will try their level best to improve their spoken English. I hope the education ministry will consider the matter in all seriousness.

Md. Gias uddin Chy
Islami Bank Bd. Ltd
Station Road, Ctg.

Exams in Buet and related problems

Buet students are no doubt meritorious. Most of them have a Bengali medium background. But here in Buet the medium of instruction is English because of the presence of foreign students. Many of the students find it very difficult to follow the class lectures. There is no coaching system or tutor, other than class teachers in Buet.

As the students get admitted in Buet, their demand in coaching market, through which they came, goes up. As such, they start earning money by engaging themselves in coaching. A survey shows that almost all of them are involved in coaching, neglecting their own studies during class time. They have to wait for preparatory leave for preparing themselves for exams.

Things must improve in this area. Otherwise, Buet students will not perform according to their potential.

A Buet Teacher
Dhaka

Not really surprising

Asia Energy's plight in Phulbari was perhaps not very surprising for

experienced observers. It is a company that is solely based on a single project in Bangladesh. In other words, all their eggs are in one basket. Unfortunately, the board of the company does not consist of a single Bangladeshi and the board members are mostly pooled together from the mining sector.

In order for a company to be successful in an international operation it is imperative that the board should consist of members from diverse fields of experience and expertise. Most important of all, it must have representation from the country where its operation is based, in this case Bangladesh.

Khan MJA Huq
Churton Street, London

'The voting right'

I strongly disagree with the views expressed in the letter 'The voting right' by Mr. Shaifur Rahman, London, UK, which was published on October 2. In a very arrogant way, he has termed our uneducated citizens 'unaware', and has advocated for a 'prerequisite test' for them to be voters.

A section of the educated mass have a false sense of superiority, just by virtue of their academic qualification. Because of their snobbish blindness, they fail to realise that only formal education doesn't make one politically conscious, nor do they understand that political and social awareness can be evident in an uneducated person. "Uneducated are ignorants", that's how the 'educated' categorise others, as if their petty knowledge about economics, political science or international relations has made them truly enlightened and thus superior to the rest of the society.

However, it is the 'ignorant' mass that come to the streets in times of need. They give away their lives for the educated to thrive on. From the Language Movement in 1952 to the Asia Energy movement in 2006, the 'unaware' people have sacrificed their blood just for the sake of democracy, people's right and empowerment. Who will ever forget

Noor Hossain, was he 'ignorant' or 'unaware'? What about the people killed in Kansat, how many economists or political scientists were there?

And lastly, the crown of the most corrupt nation in the world -- is it due to the unawareness of the uneducated mass or due to the unscrupulous avarice of the 'enlightened' educated mass?

I won't say the educated people have not sacrificed for the country. The students in particular have always responded to the call of the nation, the majority of the educated people are patriotic and politically conscious. But any attempt to disenfranchise the uneducated yet conscious people or creating a barrier for them to vote in the national elections will be antithetical to the essence of democracy. Because the first and foremost pillar of democracy is the universal voting right for all the adult citizens, irrespective of their education and social or economic status. The people of Bangladesh have always taken the right decision in the elections, despite their lack of formal education, and I'm sure they will continue to be equally prudent in doing so in future.

Faiyaz Al Zamal
McGill University, Montreal, Canada

Dhaka University

The word "insecure", which is applicable to Dhaka University, is really a matter of great regret and alarm. If we look back we can see the subtle aspects of the university, which originated from the deep commitment to the long cherished freedom of this country and our rich traditions. But things are so different today!

Md. R. Rahat
Polashy, Dhaka

Ramadan and Muslim fraternity

Everything contains something special and so does the Hijri Calendar. Ramadan is a significant

গববর্ষ উষু

Meena

I, to my utter delight, came to notice that Meena Day (Meena cartoon on TV) has been observed in the country. What made the name special to me is that it is Meena that represents us, its instructive incidents, the natural sketches for the background of its setting, and on top of all its soothing and sweet tone that speaks Bengali through the tone of a proud Bengali kid! Congrats to Meena's maker and the organisation that is upholding its spirit!

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

month for the Muslim community, which symbolises fraternity and fellow feeling.

However, a proper understanding of the teachings of Ramadan is necessary to evaluate it correctly.

M Alauddin Ansary
Zahurul Haque Hall, DU

Too many acronyms!

It is hard to keep track of the bewildering plethora of organisations lending their voice to the din leading up to the elections. Oikya this, Oikya that, Nagorik this, Nagorik that, this Jote, that Jote, this Dal, that Dal, CPD, JMB, BNP, AL, JP, CEC, DDT, SBD, acronyms galore! It would behoove a daily like DS to come out with a supplement listing all these organisations, their mani-

festoos, the principles, alliances, funding sources etc., who is doing what, when, how etc. So that we, the voting public, can sort out the wheat from the chaff!

Shawkat Ali, Corona, CA

Accept popular demand

There have been enough writings in

the print media and enough discussions in the electronic media as well as in the various national level seminars & meetings on the acceptability of Justice KM Hasan as the chief adviser of the caretaker government and Justice MA Aziz as the chief election commissioner.

These two persons are supposed to be persons of integrity but they have not proved themselves to be

so. If they are patriotic and want to see the country not plunging into a catastrophic situation, they should accept the popular demand.

Rezaur Rahman
On e-mail

Dhaka: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

I find it interesting to go through the serial on the above subject in your issues of Star City. Interviews of eminent citizens make one point clear that future of Dhaka city is bleak unless something unusual happens. There is no doubt that gradually Dhaka city is collapsing. No sooner

you step out of your home you land up in chaos and confusion and promise of worst days ahead. You only find solace when you safely return home. One thing that most interviewees did not mention is the changes in cuisines and eating habits of people in Dhaka city in the last few

decades..

When I first came to Dhaka in 1951 as a school kid, there was no such thing as cakes, pastries, or chanachur of Calcutta variety. In the mid-fifties the Aga Khani community first introduced chanachur, then came cakes and pastries from Shahbagh

Hotel bakery followed by Kash Biryani around this time. In 1960 a Chinese (Cafe China) introduced Chinese cuisine to Dhakaites that soon became the favourite dish of Bengalees. Chicken tikka and boti kebab were introduced in the mid-sixties by a small shop known as Fancy Kebab House at the swimming pool area of

Biharis introduced Kacchi



Bangabandhu Stadium, later followed by Darul Kebab House. From the early-eighties we saw new varieties of international cuisines finding their way into our plates. Dhaka can now boast of varieties of international cuisines starting from Mughlai food to Thai, Korean, Vietnamese,

Greek, Italian foods. Fast foods like hamburger, pizza, fried chicken have also invaded our eating habits. By the way, fuchka and chatpati were first introduced in 1953 by a Punjabi whose stall was outside the old railway station and he was murdered later on. For those who have been in

Dhaka since the early-fifties it is unbelievable to see cosmopolitan cuisines overtaking the traditional ones. At least in this sector Dhaka can be admired.

Ziauddin Ahmed
Gulshan, Dhaka

