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Politics: confused and confusing



With so many private TV channels, it's encouraging to see that the percentage of citizens (who are simply tired of both the political parties) is no longer insignificant. Many of us readily say, "No more, this country is finished, I won't vote for any party as they are all self centred corrupt politicians." But I don't see how that will solve the problem. Because, the only effect will be less percentage of voter turn out. The inefficient corrupt candidates will still get elected, one way or the other. And we will be back to square one in the political arena. So I ask the experienced & learned people of our country—how do we come out of this mess? I have some observations, which I like to share.

It is apparent that the new generation people, who are educated & qualified, are moving away from politics. So as a result we have mastans & muscle men replacing them. It has become a business. Generally, those who are pouring in more money (mostly black money), are getting party nominations, and they get elected; you don't see, good honest people coming to politics any more. And how can you? In order to do so, you need a lot of money for your publicity, (as otherwise no one will know about you or your good deeds) & secondly how safe is it for an honest person to enter the dirty business? The moment you challenge their position in your area, you become the target, and there is no way you can get help from the police.

We all realise that the present political order needs to be changed. But how can we commoners bring about that change?
Tanvir
Dhaka Cantonment

Our politicians never tell the truth. When I was watching the live TV interview of a former minister, all of us observed it again. One question was why couldn't we take the exams? Why are you obstructing our studies in school, college or university? What have we (the students) done to you that you prevent us from appearing in exams?

The minister replied that they were doing everything for the people. Aren't the students part of the general population? Moreover, he never said sorry and could not say when we would be able to appear in our exams. Then he went back to 1952, 1965, 1969, 1971, 1975, 1990, 1996, and told us what they had done during those times and how they conquered the throne.

But he apparently forgot that this is 1906.

School/college/university going students are mostly below 20. We know very well how other developed countries became developed and we also want to build our country in a similar fashion. The only problem is you, the politicians. You can go to Singapore or the United States anytime for your health checkup but my grandfather could not go to BIRDEM from Uttara to check his blood sugar during your blockade.
Student
On e-mail

I am surprised to see how some leading politicians and journalists are directly or indirectly accepting violence as a means of protest. How does a civilised and independent nation accept blockade? Why punish the average people who have nothing to do with politics? Bangladesh needs progressive leaders who can lead the nation into the 21st century. If we could pursue political parties to nominate honest and educated candidates, election anomalies would have been reduced to a great extent. We cannot have a fair election when

political parties are not honest. Democracy is not a perfect process. It is as good as the citizen!
Engr. Md. Zaman, M.B.A., P.E.
California, USA

Let's help the neutral caretaker government to establish a peaceful environment for the election and thereby a democratic Bangladesh. We all want peace and prosperity.
Dr. Waliul Islam
On e-mail

I have seen some political posters featuring people killed in political violence. These posters are disgusting. The way the pictures have been shown on the posters is coarse. The pictures of a beheaded person and a bullet hit distorted head are repulsive. While walking on the road I have seen many people commenting on those pictures. Though the poster shows some facts, events and pictures but it has been published as a political manifesto. My concern is not there. Whoever has done this, whether it is for political purpose or not is not my headache. These grotesque pictures are very odd and frightful to look at and thus creating a phobia among the children, females. In addition to this, I also believe that our national dailies and TV channels should refrain from showing these kind of pictures.



I request the political parties not to play with human lives by using them as political instruments. Rather, they should work to build up a violence-free Bangladesh.
Arif Laskar
JU

It is with terrible disgust and frustration that I (millions along with me) have to say that due to personal rivalry between the two dynastic ladies the whole nation is suffering and falling behind in the race for human and infrastructure development. The story is simply appalling.

Even next door, Kolkata, or anywhere in India, there is so much maturity demonstrated by their political leaders and supporters/workers. But in Bangladesh we are still so much intolerant and wild and destructive. Isn't there any civilized way of drumming home one's grievances in a democracy? If we say we are following the parliamentary form, where on earth is this behaviour seen in establishing people's rights?
They say they care for the people, fight for their rights, and the whole world is promised before the election. But when it comes to education and students' exams in particular, they are least bothered about their toil and expectations. The parties are preparing to loot for the next five years.

Yes, I am really pessimistic. We are not an LDC nation, but we have been made

to receive the label, courtesy our politicians!

My son and many other boys and girls have prepared for the O-Level exams, and are appearing. What will happen if any party starts agitating and countering with wanton destruction, resulting in deaths of scores! Has any party got up to say, "We are extremely sorry that so many fellow citizens had to die just because of our foolishness?" Is there any compensation from any quarter? Will democracy prevail, will sanity return to the minds who nurture and order these acts?

The street scenario of the recent past is the most horrible I have ever seen or heard! Please refrain from such sadistic actions. Please do not incite the workers or paid hooligans to add fuel to fire.

May I please, on behalf of every peace loving and sane person in the country, request the politicians not to go to the streets for destructive and life threatening actions. Instead reach for each other's hands, and start with a vow to find a relatively sound solution and give the nation some peace and calm, some 'Hope'. Let us demonstrate maturity, tolerance, civility and respect for life and property. Let the students be able to work harder and appear for different exams in a way devoid of fear and additional stress.

Please help the nation, dear politi-

cians. Please demonstrate civility and maturity. If we want to ape the western democracy, so be it. But why not learn, borrow, and practice the good ideals. Their students do not suffer.
The innocent are not lured to inflate the 'meetings' and rallies!
Please, therefore, listen to our appeal and do not take any action that again destroys the fabric of the society and breed fear and suspicion. Please exercise restraint and proper judgment. Your decision really matters. There are definitely better ways to drive home points. Yes, there are. Think again, please.
Syed Imtiaz Ali
Banani, Dhaka

Why did the two major political parties hold a dialogue? What did they talk about and for whose benefit? What changes could their dialogue bring to our lives? To lives of people like us who have to work hard to provide for their families? I believe the dialogue or negotiation is for ensuring benefits for those few who need to do politics because that is their profession. Otherwise, why did they hold it when failure was a foregone conclusion?
Since politics became a profession, we "public" have taken a back seat and shall continue to be ignored. Why should we participate in their game? These people will have to do politics not to serve us or to

enjoy the pleasure of being liked by us; they have to get elected or be close to power to earn for their 'extremely hungry' families. Having no other profession to sate the 'insatiable hunger' for money they have to suck it out from our lives through politics.

However, I do not want to believe all the people in the political arena are in the 'business' of politics. There are some people who believe in serving, in being popular among people by doing responsible and good deeds. Of course, their number is extremely small and they are scared of the political "Frankensteins" that both parties have created. The other problem with these people, who get elected, even the good ones, is capacity. They do not have the capacity to run matters of the nation. They depend on people many of whom are corrupt, the bureaucracy. At one time holding a position in the bureaucracy was regarded as a prized one. Now it means being members of syndicates. These strong and vicious syndicates are sucking out yet more money from our lives.

Let us take one of the major crisis we are facing now; the crisis of regular power supply. I am sure I heard hesitant quiver in Sheikh Hasina's voice when she was promising a few days back that if they were elected they would bring improvement in the power sector. She fumbled because she was not sure how the problem could be solved and she also acknowledged that the syndicate had invincible strength. On the other hand, Khaleda Zia is promising every day to solve the power problem if they are elected again, with no conviction in her voice. She mentioned once that more connection was given although power generation had not increased. That is a blatant confession that her government does not know how much power should be generated before giving such connections. They don't know because the politicians do not know how matters are run; they only love power and money.

All this happens at the cost of our lives and comfort. What can we do? We are scared, powerless, confused and thoroughly disillusioned. However, once in every five years we get a little piece of paper where we get the opportunity to exercise microscopic power. How about taking advantage of that. If we are not convinced that an election would bring a major change and if we feel that it would be yet another set of "political professionals" to make our lives more miserable, we should not vote for any of them. They will be more than happy if we do not show up to vote. They will have some of their own people to vote in our place. We should go to vote and blemish the ballot paper by putting the stamp on the margins or away from the candidate's names. Our dissent might knock them to senses. Many will not like this suggestion and will tell us that such an act will be a cause of wastage of public money. Maybe we public should exercise our right to waste some of our money for a cause. Our money is being wasted anyway to erect those huge stages from where "political professionals" are giving meaningless speeches. People like us who stay awake at night worrying about the future of our children, whose only ambition is to ensure that our children have a slightly better life than our own probably need to get noticed. Unless things change substantially, we will only get the crumbs while the "political professionals" will have the pie.
Christina Rozario
Development Activist
Gulshan 1, Dhaka

We shall overcome

In many recent articles I have read that Bangladesh is a 'bottomless basket' as though this is what Henry Kissinger meant when he referred to Bangladesh many years ago as a 'basket case.' I fear the true meaning of what he said is much more cruel and challenging than that.

In the lunatic asylums of England, in the days long before such places understood mental illness or had at their disposal the numerous drugs and therapies that are available today, their managers were at their wit's end to know how to restrain and care for the inmates. Those who might be violent were chained or tied up or put in 'straitjackets'. As for those who were totally helpless and hopeless, they were just put in a foetal position and tied into large, round baskets so that they could do minimum harm to others, or themselves. Thus these 'basket cases' wasted away their brief existence.

I am horribly aware that some Bangladeshis see their country, however much they love it, as a hopeless case and cannot wait to get their visas to live elsewhere sometimes via a marriage for which their parents are prepared to pay a handsome amount, maybe in dowry.

I am sure I am not the only one of your readers, sir, who is fighting like a tiger to make Bangladesh a place where young and promising people DO want to live and who view the coming election with both hope and fear. It will surely be a test case for many as to whether they will want to leave the country or stay.

So much will depend upon the honourable behaviour of those who will be under great pressure to behave very badly indeed. Situations will surely arise (indeed, they have arisen already) in which good behaviour will be in the long-term interest of the country but NOT in the short-term self-interest of individuals or their factions or parties. I fear the moral test ahead will be more crucial than the political one but, as usual, it will be impossible to fail one and win the other.

It is up to every person in Bangladesh, inspired by the tremendous achievements of

our Nobel laureate, to brush aside in anger the cruel verdicts of the past and by his and her conduct show the world that the citizens of this country, far from being helpless and hopeless, are capable of the discipline and national pride necessary for free and fair elections and that their country can stand tall in the company of other democracies.

Basket case? What an outrageous judgment on a nation that knows that the price of freedom is in the mastery of the skills necessary to hold a free and fair election - and then, please God, accept its verdict!
Angela MV Robinson (Rev Mrs)
Headmistress Girls' Section
Bangladesh International Tutorial

Help the man in distress

Bangladesh being a poor country, where nearly 50 per cent of the people live below poverty line, the number of the destitute proportionately could be quite large. It is not surprising. And that problems of all the destitute can't be solved in one go or in the near future is understandable. The problem of one destitute is recalled here since there is scope for its solution.

The destitute is one Mr. Zainal Abedeen. He is in his seventies and almost half paralysed. He walks with much difficulty with a stick. He has nobody to take care of him as his wife died earlier followed by the death of his dear child, a daughter who was much helpful. He lives in a makeshift hut in Mirpur Section 11, Dhaka. He lives on doles that he gets, which is not enough. He came here during the partition of India in 1947 with his father and family members. Some of his brothers were in Pakistan who reportedly died except one with whom he is almost disconnected. He thus has some body in Pakistan but living here a life of destitution. His problem could be partially solved if he is taken to Pakistan. He can't go on his own for his inability to manage passage money which is too prohibitive and nor can obtain permission (visa) from the Pakistan High Commission here as such people are hardly allowed visa. But there is an instance where such kind of

person/s was/were helped. It may be worthwhile to recall that instance.

A few years back a journalist somehow could get access to one Mr. Fasihuddin (if I correctly remember the name) sheltered in Pabna Mental Hospital. He was an old educated man confined there for about two decades for the reasons not properly known. But it could be known that he was from India, and employed in the Customs Dept. etc. He had partially lost his memory and was deaf too. The journalist could communicate through writing. He was moved by his pitiable condition and made a story in a local newspaper with the hope that as he had linkage in India, he might have some relations there or in Pakistan who if they see the story might come to his rescue. I don't know how many people had seen that, but the humble self could send the press clipping to Pakistan, which a kind person arranged to publish in the print media there. By the grace of Allah that helped. It attracted the attention of a charitable person, no less than Mr. Ansar Burnie, Chairman of Burnie Trust. He took pity on him. He took all the pains to come to Bangladesh, negotiated with both the governments of Pakistan and Bangladesh and arranged to take him to Pakistan and rehabilitated him in a home for the old in Karachi as could be known later. Thus, the noble task initiated by a journalist ended happily in the rehabilitation of a destitute. This way, at least the problem of one out of millions could be solved and to that extent it was a success story in the social welfare field.

In line with the above, I would like to draw the attention of people in general and that of Mr. Ansar Burnie in particular to kindly extend helping hands to Mr. Zainul Abedeen too and take him to Pakistan, reunite with his relations there or rehabilitate him in a home for the old there. His local contact address is: Mr Zainal Abedeen, C/O, Mr Abdus Sattar Siddiqui, Medical & Maternity Centre, Section XI-C, 10-4-15, Mirpur, Dhaka.

Abu Imran
Dhaka

Sindbad's Ghost!



It is really shameful that we have to request continually a justice, Justice Mr. M. A. Aziz, to leave the post of CEC. After toiling hard to get the Advisers' Council beyond controversy (though dispute has not stopped yet on the question of their credibility), the total spotlight falls on the Election Commission (EC). While the duty of the advisers is to assist the EC in holding a free and fair election, they have to concentrate on reforming it as their first job. Mr. Aziz, our 'Sindbad's Ghost', has lost all his credibility to remain in such a vital post. As from all the corners of the country the voices against his remaining in the position of CEC are raised, he should follow KM Hasan's abdicating as an example to save the nation from violence.

He should resign immediately realising that his stubbornly partisan behaviour does not go with the title 'Justice'.
A reader
On e-mail

businessmen would not sell the commodities to Mr. Aziz. Their business is being hampered because of the road block effected by the 14-party alliance to force Mr. Aziz to resign. So, businessmen had decided to take steps against him, which can be described by a Bengali proverb "Udur Pindi Budur Ghare".

That news proves that we all are trusting the political parties. The parties use us as their weapon, but we cannot always understand their moves.
I want to request people to participate in the forthcoming election, and to vote for the right person. By choosing the right person,

we could ensure a better future for the next generation.
Shashi Khan
Bottala, Tangail

