

# Use of black money in election must be prevented

## Debapriya Bhattacharya

There is no western or any outside power behind us. No one gives us any money. We believe the people of the country are the source of our strength. We expect you to go and talk about this with your party members. Recently, the two leaders have held meetings with the grassroots level leaders of their respective parties. We have noticed that these views have been reflected there also. We consider that as progress.

## Zakir Hossain

It is true that politics in the country has gone from bad to worst. But most people are getting benefits out of this political system. But in today's dialogue most of the blames have been directed against the politicians. In Pabna, Tipu Biswas and Ranesh Maitra had contested elections. They are not known to be corrupt people. There is no complaint of corruption against them. They are not owners of black money. But people did not vote for them. There are many honest people in Awami League and BNP. They cannot gather much support because of lack of money. Today, in this dialogue, when some of the organisers speak in support of some looters we become astonished. Even then we must say that what we could not do as politicians you have done it. We hope you will play a supportive role in driving away the ills from the society.

## Shamsul Haque Tuku



In this dialogue, discussants have identified politicians as the root of all problems in the country. But, it is the politicians who have been behind all the achievements of this country. Today, politics is divided, people are divided and even the civil society is divided. Today, everywhere Rajakars and Albadars are gaining grounds and the country has become a safe haven for militants. In this backdrop, some civil society members are trying to unite everyone with the spirit of our Liberation War. This is appreciable that you are going to the districts to talk about selecting honest candidates. I welcome the organisers on behalf of Pabna district Awami League.

It is a big question now whether the next election will be free and fair. We have to find out why there is no dialogue between the big political parties. It is the demand of the people that the EC will have to hold the election maintaining neutrality. The president should not have excessive power so that he can misuse it. My appeal to the civil society is you should highlight these demands of the people. Democracy has been destroyed in 1975 through the assassination of the Father of the Nation. After that, military rulers have ruled the country in the name of democracy. The time has come to get united against Rajakars and Albadars.

## Rehman Sobhan

When the Pakistani military attacked Dhaka in 1971, people in Pabna also put up a fight. But in the end what did the people get? Did we ever try to find out about their families? Are their names included in our history? During Pakistani rule, we have seen two economic systems. But in Bangladesh

we can see two different societies. On one side are the elites and on the other common people. But this is not what we had wanted during our liberation war. Did the farmer who had fought in the war get a piece of land? In Chalanbil area in your district, ten lakh acre of land is under illegal occupation. We have to find ways how we can give this to the real landless. How can a country progress where there is no economic democracy? In 1971 the entire nation had joined the liberation war. The civil society also took part in it.

Honest people will not come from the sky. They will come through your vote. People will have to stand behind honest persons. Your responsibility will not end after electing an honest man to power. You will have to watch his every step. You will have to monitor what he is doing and not doing. Many of you have said that everything is happening in Dhaka. I would ask you to take responsibility. Come forward to organise the civil society. We all have equal responsibility in upholding democracy.

## Abdul Kader

Poverty has increased along with corruption and terrorism in the country. This was the prominent feature of all the past three governments. That is why it is important to implement accountability. Two rivers flow along two sides of Pabna. On one side is the Padma, and on the other is the Jamuna. These two rivers erode every year and as a result a large number of people are becoming destitute. Mills and factories are closing down one after another. This is compounding poverty in the area.

As a result of this frustrating situation, young generation is drifting towards terrorism, drugs and militancy. We have to ask politicians some question before the elections. We must ask them when will they solve the local level problems. They will have to remove the discrimination in the distribution of wealth that exists at the national level. According to the parliamentary standing committee on land, government property worth 78 thousand crore is under illegal occupation. We have to ask politicians when will they recover those properties from the grabbers.

## Punjab Ali Biswas

We have many things to feel frustrated about but at the same time there have been achievements also in the last 36 years. We shall have to identify the actual causes to solve the problems. If we want a corruption-free administration then we shall have to have corruption-free political parties. Many of our problems will be solved if the political parties become free of corruption. Therefore, political parties need massive reforms. Party nomination has to be done from grassroots level on the basis of votes. To make elections free and fair, elections have to be held within one week of candidate nomination. This will stop tendency to spend huge sums of money.

One-colour posters should be made mandatory. Candidates will have to hold elections in groups instead of individually.

## Prof. AR Shamsul Islam

From the discussion we can say that things are not going well in our country. We had joined the liberation war with the hope of establishing a society based on equality. That hope is on way to oblivion. We have made MPs out of many dishonest and incompetent people. We now realise that mistake. Now we want to elect honest and competent people to power. We want to see a prosperous Bangladesh in 2021. As a first step, we shall have to elect honest people in the elections in 2007. In the past we had elected wrong people to power. They had let loose a reign of looting and corruption during their tenure of power. On the other hand, the number of poor people living under the poverty line is increasing every day. Despite a High Court ruling, the Election Commission has not yet provided the people with the particulars of the candidates. We have noticed that decisions of EC or court are hardly imposed by the authorities if these go against the rich or the powerful. Majority of the people of Bangladesh are poor. That is why they run after a candidate for money. These candidates also exploit poverty. To alleviate poverty we have to take more steps. The Election Commission is now in the grip of political parties. The cases filed with the EC have to be settled fast. Let us take the decision that we shall not vote for dishonest people any more. We shall vote for honest people. Because, if we do not elect honest people the country will not move forward.

I thank you all for taking part in today's programme. I also thank the organisers.

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Prof AR Shamsul Islam, former Principal, Mohila College, Pabna (Chairperson: Regional Citizens Dialog, Pabna)
2. Matiur Rahman, editor, Prothom Alo
3. Abdul Matin Mian, president, district lawyers association, Pabna.
4. Mahbub-ul-Alam Mukul, president, Chemist and Druggist Association, Pabna.
5. Baby Islam, Chairperson, Pabna Diabetic Hospital and Automobile Owners Association.
6. Purabi Maitra, Chairperson, Mohila Parishad, Pabna.
7. Prof Muhammad Nurunnabi, former principal, Govt. Bulbul College, Pabna.
8. Capt. (ret'd) Dr Ilias Iftikhar Rasul, medical specialist.
9. Gopal Sanyal, Pabna Drama Circle.
10. Abul Kashem, convener, Sammilito Sangskritik Jote, Pabna
11. Samina Shirin, commissioner, Pabna Pourashava,
12. Masud Rana, student, Govt. Edward College, Pabna.
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22. Anwarul Haq, correspondent, The Daily Ittefaq, Pabna.
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27. Habibur Rahman, general secretary, Pabna Reporters' unity.
28. Manik Majumdar, secretary, Uttar Bangla Sangskriti, Parishad, Pabna
29. Aminur Rahman, executive member, Pabna Diabetic Swamity
30. Md Abul Mashud, general secretary, Bonomali Institute, Pabna
31. Adv. Abdus Samad Khan, general secretary, Bangladesh Human Rights Commission, Pabna
32. FM Kafi Sharkar, Chairman, Dokan Malik Samity, Pabna.
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35. Hassan Ali, editor, Weekly Noya Andolan and member secretary, Human Rights Bureau, Pabna.
36. Md Kobad Ali, Pabna Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
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59. Gonesh Das, drama activist, Pabna
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68. Murshad Sobhani, correspondent, Dainik Inqilab
69. Shafikul Islam Shibli, president, Pabna reporters' Unity
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71. MA Salam, executive director, Pabna Progoti Sangstha
72. Sarwar Alam, director, Samata
73. Mustafizur Rahman, culture and literature secretary, Bangladesh Chhatra League, Pabna
74. Sirajul Islam, general secretary, AR corner business samity
75. Amirul Islam, lecturer, Alia Madrasa
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