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# Voters' dilemma

Thirty-five years has passed since Bangladesh became independent and yet our elected representatives, have failed to provide for the voters, their Constitutional right for "Democratic Government" and an "Electoral Body" that will formulate procedures for a "Free and Fair Election". Today the Voters find themselves in "the horns of a dilemma" in respect of three major points; (1) Will there be an election? (2) Will they be able to vote? (3) Will they be able to trust their elected representatives, collectively (in power and in opposition) to follow democratic principles to the letter, in formulating policies that will assure them of an enriched and secured life?

The "dilemma" is directly attributed to the recent failure of the "Dialogue" between the AL and BNP, mainly due to the lack of political will, wisdom, and strategy; and indirectly to the CG system, which is not free from weaknesses as the voters and political parties are now witnessing.

However, the voters find it pathetic and difficult to comprehend that their elected representatives

as leaders and political activists: (1) lack human qualities and feelings, (2) that in utter disregard of human life and sufferings, adopt undemocratic methods to settle their disputes, (3) that without consent from voters (through a simple "YES" and "NO" poll system) opted directly for a programme of laying siege and blockade paralyzing the country, (5) in the street battles, against each other, its Bengalis killing the Bengalis and (4) When all the "Hullabaloo" is over, the voters have to vote for these representatives!

In his article, "Strange indeed is this land" (The Daily Star July 2, 2006) Shahnoor Wahid states, "Then we have this special breed of people who go about doing business of politics as they are not good at anything else. Strangely enough, these self-proclaimed people's leaders or netas in Bengali are always asking for people's blood! They goad others to lay down their lives so that they may go to power and buy brand new duty-free cars."

The "dilemma" for the citizens continues, as elec-

tions must be held for Bangladesh to continue to remain within the frame of democracy.

Meanwhile, concrete solutions have, NOT, yet been found. The ten member Advisers are facing compounding problems, but, as reported in all TV channels, they have jointly submitted to the President/CA their recommendations and now "It's only the President" who will decide-and that's the major weakness of the CG system; whereas, if the Election Commission was strengthened and made a completely independent institution, the President couldn't negate the decision of the CEC.

Let's pray for wisdom to prevail amongst all those who are negotiating for democracy and especially the President, who, by virtue of his position, is currently the most powerful administrator; but hopefully as citizen first, and President next, he will remain morally obliged to work for the well being of the nation.

**Badrul Islam**  
Uttara, Dhaka



PHOTO: AFP

# An open letter to Sheikh Hasina

At the outset, let me express my unconditional apology for any remarks made in the following paragraphs and of course in case you consider my writing this letter to you an act of unwarranted audacity.

Nevertheless, deep in my heart, I feel that this is about time when someone must come forward and have a friendly chat with you as regards your relation with civil society individuals and organisations vis-à-vis your approach to election policies, strategies, decisions, and actions.

This has been a phase of time when everyone with some proximity with you has been speaking endlessly, pretending to be your devoted campaigner, while in reality he is largely driven by his own-interest, using you and your organisation as a platform for serving his own professional interest.

For the last year or so it was becoming apparent to many citizens that BNP was doing rather badly and it would have some adverse impact for BNP in the Election-2007. While it was largely BNP's failure in governance in some sectors rather than AL's actions that contributed in creating a favorable scenario for AL, we can now clearly see with utmost disbelief that how callously AL has almost succumbed to its own sheer failure in anticipating public perception and is set to reverse the situation as a result of some awful decisions and actions which eventually made life much easier for BNP during the aftermath of 28/11.

Among the citizens who are not political activists per se but observe the development with some interest, many would now argue that it could not be the AL senior policy makers who have made such blunders. Arguably, AL's civil society partners have completely misled AL decisions toward this near catastrophe, if I may say so. Many of us were amazed to see during the recent days and months, how AL's politics was designed, molded and delivered by a group of people under the banner of civil society in general and three lawyers in particular belonging to Nagorik Committee and Supreme Court Ainjibi Samity.

I wonder what went wrong with your AL. Did you really need to depend that heavily on those three lawyers for such simple explanations of the constitution?

In a long journey, at times one needs a break. We think you need a breather to examine the whole scenario before you make the next move. For God's sake, please think alone, you read the constitution alone, and you make a decision for the next move alone.

Many of us may not vote for you in a democracy, but will always support you in your journey towards creating a violence-free peaceful country.

**Zahid Rahman, Development Consultant, Gulshan**



PHOTO: AFP

## Google Earth

A few days ago I was looking at the satellite images of Dhaka city in Google Earth.

Besides being amazed at the extent of satellite imagery of Google Earth, I was totally appalled at how this "megacity" was growing. Thousands of buildings scattered here and there without the least sense of urban planning, virtually devoid of any greenery, landscaping, open public spaces, water bodies, lakes etc. I wonder how long the existing ones will last! One could easily understand why traffic congestions are so rampant in Dhaka; the numbers of major thoroughfares, roads and highways are pathetic for a city like Dhaka. This city will face an urban catastrophe definitely if nothing is done quickly. Just imagine what would happen if a major earthquake hit Dhaka? The situation is similar all over the country. I would like to request all to look at Google Earth to find an overall picture of the current urban planning situation of our country.

I wonder what our so-called urban city planners are up to.

**Oneil Osman**  
One-mail

## Endangered democracy

We do have many things all right but one of them, i.e., our democracy, is deteriorating. We do not

have reports of corruption available about China or India but we are aware of the level of corruption in Bangladesh, which makes us feel bad. Ours is a democracy of the powerful, by the powerful and for the powerful. Common man, particularly honest ones, has no say in anything happening around them. I am told by a gentleman today (an economist) that things might improve gradually in Bangladesh with economic development being sponsored by the powerful NRBs abroad and the corporate giants who are keen to see justice and fair play to thrive on the economic development. The problem in the prevailing corrupt system is that talented people are being sidelined unless they are connected to power. Power is obviously with the most corrupt among politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen. I do hope that someone ponders over this issue and tries to come up with some feasible solution to nurture talent not linked to power.

**Sirajul Islam**  
Gulshan 1, Dhaka

## Atrocious behaviour

I could not keep my balance of mind when I read in your daily that "Six Imams were kicked out of a US Airways flight at Minnesota" for no valid reason and more outrageous behavior was shown when they were handcuffed!

How dare they do such harm to

the respectable passengers with whose money they remain afloat?

Such atrocities cannot be allowed to happen anywhere, not at all at the hands of the so-called civilized people! I condemn this audacious action of the US Airways at the loudest of my voice. Side by side, I call upon all airlines to stop charging and withhold all the undue charges they collected from the passengers in the name of a fictitious play--aftermath of '9/11'.

**A F Rahman**  
One-mail

## Bribing debut

I am a university student and also a young citizen of Bangladesh, I am from the generation of future leaders who are learning from the senior citizens. One unfortunate evening I learnt to bribe a government servant and also understood that I am helpless against the system. On that evening an SI of police came to my home to verify my passport application. I knew about the process but didn't know about the hidden and vital part. He checked the certificates, ID, and utility bills. At one point he started to tell me how hard it is nowadays to get passports on time. He told me that many students couldn't get their passports even in 1 year for technical difficulties. It made me worried. Then he started to talk about how much he spent on transportation & lot of other things, which actually meant that I must make him 'happy'

to get the passport smoothly. So I had to give him "baksish" to make him "happy" (in his words). As I didn't know the regular rate of bribes, I gave him Tk 300 at first, but he refused by saying it's too low. Finally he seemed happy with Tk 800. Before leaving he assured that he would do things that will make the process fast. I saw the magic of bribe and how shiny it made the eyes of that SI. That's the story of my first bribing and I don't know (but I'm sure) how many times I have to bribe in my professional life!

**Adil**  
One-mail

## Big eyewash

The CA of CG in handling the CEC standoff had really hoodwinked us. Is MA Aziz's departure going to bring any change? Hasn't a person from the same band replaced him? Even, two more ECs won't help, as they would not be any different. May I request the 14 party alliance to keep a strict vigil on this conspiracy too?

**Wahid Shafi**  
Dhaka

## Flawed MBBS admission test

I'm writing this letter on behalf of all those meritorious students who passed the HSC exams this year. It's a matter of great regret that our MBBS admission test question papers were leaked once before.

Therefore the test had to be postponed, but the question papers were leaked once again.

So, who is responsible for this and who will protect the interests of the meritorious students?

The education authorities should look into the matter.

**Minar Mahmud Hossainy**  
A system sufferer

## 'If I were justice

### Abdul Aziz'

On the November 19 issue of DS Mr. Maswood Alam Khan wrote a letter entitled "If I were justice Abdul Aziz". The letter attracted many others and me for its title. Justice M A Aziz has already established himself as a very controversial person. He is making the election process uncertain. A business organisation (Dhaka Metropolitan Shop Owners Association) has declared a programme to pray to the Almighty for creating rahmat in his heart, so that he may feel enough is enough and step down from the post of CEC. In such a context when a person tries to understand the situation placing him on the hot seat, it is really interesting. But after reading the letter I was disappointed. The writer only tried to defend the CEC throughout his letter without considering the miseries he has brought to democracy and to the people of Bangladesh. He asked the people to convince themselves that his departure will ensure a safer soci-

ety. I would like to convince him that if he does not go, then the situation will further deteriorate. But in real sense he is in a position from where he should convince the people of Bangladesh that he is doing the right job; people are not bound to convince him. He was made CEC to protect people's right to vote freely and thus to choose their representatives. But his performance says a different tale. It seems that he is acting as an election engineer to influence the election results in favour of a particular party or coalition. So all political parties except BNP-Jamaat, demanded his removal.

The CEC's duty is to conduct a

free and fair election. But with as many as 13 million fake voters on his voter list, as per the data of European Parliament, how is it possible? What is your answer about the voter list? You have violated the High Court directives regarding the preparation of voter list and thus squandered Tk 64 crore. Newspaper reports suggest that there are gross anomalies in giving print orders of the voter lists; different purchase activities of the Election Commission and almost all acts of the CEC are controversial. He has made it clear that free and fair election is impossible under this EC. So political parties and civil society members demand his

resignation and appointment of an honest, acceptable person to the post to clear the way for a fair election.

It is true that the post of the CEC is a constitutional one. But everybody should remember that any constitutional post has a vast responsibility. You are oath bound to uphold the constitution and the rights of the countrymen. If you cannot serve the purposes of the constitutional post, there is nothing wrong in demanding your resignation.

**Sufian**  
Borobazar, Amberkhana, Sylhet

# Politics of grabbing power



PHOTO: AFP

The country is passing through very difficult days and some political parties are threatening to destroy all the public institutions on the plea of holding a fair, free and acceptable election.

Every party feels that it is the only party that should run the country. Their only objective is now to get into power by any means. Bangladesh is a country of 114 millions people and we want to see the country progressing fast to have better and secured job opportunities for all, better employment opportunities and better economic growth with social security. It is true despite all the impediments created by opposition political parties, the economy was better, though the prices of some agricultural products were on the rise.

I would like to request all the political parties to behave a little more sensibly.

**Rahim**  
Timor Leste

# Fertilizers and environmental pollution

Environmental pollution is a global problem and is common to both developed as well as developing countries. Nowadays it is also becoming a big problem for our country.

Research investigation does not indicate negative effects of chemical fertilizers if applied as per crop need, in right proportion and in right time. Unfortunately, chemical fertilizer use in our country is imbalanced, resulting in loss or improper uptake by plants and thus contamination of soil and water through various processes. Absence of proper surveillance and monitoring has led to unscrupulous marketing of contaminated fertilizer materials- which are harmful to the environment. It is to be mentioned here that organic manures do also contaminate environment through release of heavy metals.

Fertilizer application is essential for crop production. But over doses of fertilizer may cause a great problem for both soil and water.

Generally, high doses of nitrogenous and phosphate fertilizer application may cause pollution in the environment. In our country nitrogenous fertilizer is widely used. Nitrogenous fertilizer, mainly urea, when applied

in the soil, is converted to nitrate by the microbial activities in soil.

Fertilizers containing phosphorous are partly responsible for increase of water contamination. The major source of phosphorus contamination in surface water comes from direct dumping of wastes and from eroded suspended soils from urban and agricultural land.

So farmers have to be aware of the problems associated with the use of chemical fertilizers.

**Abu Wali Raghieb Hassan**  
PhD fellow & Upazila Agriculture Officer (LR)  
Dept. of Agril. Extension

