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Where are the Issues?

Most of Dhaka is already a nightmare and BBC has only yesterday wished none to have the misfortune of being condemned to live in Dhaka. The election manifestoes of all the parties, embodying all the dreams and promises that one can think up, do not see any problem in the cancerous growth of Dhaka population. The explosion of Dhaka is but an outward symptom of something gravely wrong with this state.

Our entire population is seemingly rushing to one single swampy little crowded pocket, called Dhaka. The better off in all of the 70 thousand villages have a dream to someday live in Dhaka which is already home to all the moneyed people in the land. And all that have been pauperised in the villages and pushed out of their ancestral callings of farming and weaving, fishing and pottery and have been living for years as landless farm-hands, trek to Dhaka. This is a complete breakdown of microcosmic economy leading to dangerous erosion in the societal qualities of our people. This owes roundly to a very big absence of governance - an all-round anarchic situation.

Our successive governments have presided over a constant process of liquidating whatever a state or a megaorganisation should represent control and discipline, unity and participation, knowledge and debate, tolerance and accommo-

The manifestoes do not hide the parties desperate run for power. All of them treat it as secondary what this power will be used for. The all-too-simplistic promises and pledges try to paint a utopia having little to do with the realities of Bangladesh and the urgencies they dictate. Not one addresses the problems of water fuel and forests, people and employment, production and distribution and consumption in any meaningful and convincing manner. The message is singular in its true content — vote us to power, we will then do whatever is good for you. Experience says this simple approach ends up in doing whatever is good for us or the partisans.

A manifesto is a covenant between a people and its government. The Constitution excepted, it is the only covenant between the two. It is a pity to see such documents not featuring the first challenges — physical and organisational — to our existence as a polity and a society.

Amicably Solvable

The horns of Awami League and BNP seem badly locked in their still unmitigated insistence to stage their last public rallies before the polls at the Manik Mia Avenue on June 10.

By rule and convention, however, all kinds of electioneering ought to cease a full 48 hours before the poll-day. In other words, the cut-off point for the stoppage of campaigning is 6 am on June 10 when the 48-hour restriction should begin to apply. How could there be public meetings slated well inside the two-day ban period?

This may have been a technical oversight, almost a God-sent one, which we feel should be cashed in on to wriggle out of what apparently is a catch-22 situation. The two major parties stand ih need of rescheduling their public meetings. And in doing so, they can avoid crossing swords on the same venue, date and time and hold their rallies separately, imbued with a spirit of dignified disengagement. This, we can assure them, will not affect their chances of a rewarding communion with the electorate.

Understandably, they are keen on a last-minute show of strength at the capital city to get a clinching word circulate to the voters throughout the country. This purpose will not be defeated if the BNP and the Awami League hold their rallies on successive dates but on the same venue. In fact, taking such a course is advisable from the viewpoint of allowing the public to gauge their popularity levels in unmixed gatherings.

Even so, if the opportunity cost for anyone party not to hold its rally on the last working day is overvalued by it, then, of course, we suggest that the party which applied for the venue, date and time ahead of the other should enjoy precedence in allotment.

The Election Commission has referred the matter, along with a report of Dhaka District Electoral Enquiry Committee on the subject, to the Chief Adviser for his decision. Towards an amicable settlement of the dispute we have only put forward some humble suggestions hoping that these will receive the urgent attention of all concerned.

Amazing Neglect

Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the premier government sector treatment facility in the country, is falling in a self-declared disuse, at least in one vital segment of its field of activity. It has suspended — with effect from Saturday — admission of patients requiring surgery.

The tragedy is, this does not come as a bolt from the blue; surely it took a long time before all but one of the 12 General Operation Theatres (GOTs) became virtually unusable through a persistent paucity of water and electricity. The rudimentary rules of hygiene meant to stave off post-operative infection are difficult to follow with flawed airconditioning topping the list of drawbacks.

Thank God, without spreading ourselves too thin on the numerous problems besetting the DMCH, we have a focal-point of attention in the deplorable state of the operation theatres. Let's get it over with by ensuring a quick placement of Tk 7 crore in maintenance money included in the overall budget for renovation amounting to Tk 55

crore. Any further bureaucratic delay in getting the OTs ready will be considered an unfriendly act against the citizenry.

You Cannot be Both Pope and Luther

T. Paul writing to the trou Quarter century on, this country is still in search of a proper identity — the identity she lost on the fateful night bled Christian Church in of August 15, 1975. The country paid a very heavy price for that. Civil society has almost been destroyed. Societal the Greek city of Corinth stated - 'for the Letter values have been thrown to the winds. killeth, but the Spirit giveth

The caretaker government

headed by Justice Habibur Rahman is the direct end-result of a popular movement. With the swearing in of the caretaker government the country accepted the fact that in to day's Bangladesh election, only a non-partisan government could ensure people's right to choose. With the solemn swearing in on April 3. Justice Habibur Rahman and his team took upon themselves the legal and moral responsibility of holding a free and fair election.

The spirit of the mandate given to the caretaker government translated itself into the one and only Executive Authority to run the administration of the Republic till the election. The mandate emanated from the popular upsurge, and as stated in Article 7 of the constitution: All powers in the republic belong to the people

The controversy over the actions of the President has to be seen in this light. Whereas the 13th amendment gives the charge of the Ministry of Defence to the President, the President may administer the business relating to the Ministry of Defence only as a member of the government The executive authority rests in the government of Justice Habibur Rahman and the 10member Advisory Council for the reasons stated above.

The 13th Amendment as inserted as Chapter 11 A is to be seen in conjunction with Article 61 as amended. Article 61 deals with the powers of the supreme command of the Defence services of Bangladesh. President as the supreme commander shall exercise the powers regulated by

Article 62 reads as follows and I quote.

. Parliament shall by law provide for regulating — (a) the raising and maintaining of the Defence services of Bangladesh and of

their reserves; (b) the grant of commissions there in:

(c) the appointment of chiefs of staff there in: and (d) the discipline and other matters relating to those services and reserves.

2. Until Parliament by law provides for the matters specified in Clause (1) the President may, by order, provide for such of them as are not already sub-

ject to existing law. The interesting point to note is that this article has not been repealed by the 13th Amendment, nor has if been suspended, even temporarily: The constitution of the country, is the embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the 120 million people of Bangladesh who achieved their motherland after a heavy sacrifice. Every word, every letter and every phrase of the constitution is sanctified with the sacred blood of the 3 million martyrs. The constitution has to be seen in its totality.

Of all great subjects, savs, J.S. Mill. much remains to be said, and none of this more true than of the British Constitution.

Walter Bagehot has taken pains to expound, better than anybody else perhaps, the spirit of the constitution of a parliamentarian form of government. The cabinet bears collective responsibility but the members of the cabinet are all equal. The Chief Executive is the primus enter pares (first among equals). This system rejects Plato's myth of "noble lie"

Accountability and transparency, thus, emerges as the 'mascot' of the system. In extending the authority of the Prime Minister, Gladstone and Disraeli elevated the status of the office almost comparable to that of the US president.

The 13th Amendment alone, therefore, does not empower anybody else other than the Chief Advisor to run the affairs of the state. Justice Habibur Rahman, by distancing himself from the presidential address on the national hookup on May 20, has told the people at home and abroad, that the decisions taken by the President between 18 and 20 May, were taken by the President alone.

The statement of the Chief Advisor underlined the fact that there was another power base which was working in parallel and not in harmony with the caretaker government. This fact was further proved by the mysterious deletion of two most relevant and important phrases of the C.A. s statement in the radio and TV broadcast at 10 and 11 pm on the 20th night.

Subsequently the full text of the C.A.'s unexpurgated and untampered was broadcast under the direct advice of the Chief Executive. The suspicion of the citizenry of this country deepened when an elaborate ISPR bulletin was telecast at 8 pm news in the name of the government on May 25. The government embargoed the bulletin for 10 O'clock news!

Our valiant and patriotic armed forces have a special place in our hearts for their glorious contribution in the War of Liberation. They have received international acclaim for their participation in peace keeping operations in all the troubled spots of the world Unfortunately they have been used by some coterie with vested interest since the post-August 15, 1975 period. Many of the freedom fighters have been eliminated or thrown out of service on one pretext on another. This time also most of the persons implicated are freedom fighters.

The court of enquiry itself has raised many questions. Its mandate is to submit a report by June 5 and thereby hangs a tale. Fearing a possibility of summary dispensation with all the appertenances of witchhunt and a Kangaroo court US Congressman Gillman and the French Human Rights Activist Mary Schmidlin have called upon the Bangladesh President to hold an open and public trial Sir David Stell Mi leader, of International Institute Democracy and Election Assistance has also requested the Govt. to postpone the report of Enquiry Commission beyond June 12.

The President, a distinguished student of law and jurisprudence made himself more controversial by giving an interview to the BBC. The remarks he made, which were further amplified in the ISPR bulletin are likely to prejudice the report of the Court of Enquiry.

This is one reason why MONTESQUIEU fought till the very end of his life for the separation of judiciary from executive. You cannot be the Prosecutor as well as the Judge. The ability of any society to see the difference makes it more civilised or less civilised. For the French statesman, justice was the supreme political virtue. Public virtues diminish if decisions taken by leaders of the republic lack transparency.

Simplify the bill depositing system

Sir, It would be evident from the long queue before the bank counters that the number of genuine telephone, electricity, gas, water etc., subscribers/consumers are quite large in number. 'n fact majority of them are keen to clear bills in due time.

But unfortunately the bill deposit system in banks is not so good. People have to stand in queues for a long time to

May I request the authority concerned to please simplify the bill depositing system and depute additional manpower to help people promptly in depositing their bills without wasting much of their valuable

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Head gear is no obstacle

Sir, The ability to tide over a cultural constraint is tantamount to 'rise against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them.' Wearing head gear is not merely a Quranic injunction for women, it is actually the confirmation of a long tradition practised by the followers of all the Abrahamic religions, and even by Hinduism, and by other social groups of the East. The wrong conception of culture, and ironic misconception of women's rights have led many urban, and so-called educated women with inherent inferiority complex common in impoverished countries to do away with the tradition blessed by Allah and liked by his last

apostle Mohammad (peace be upon him).

There are people who, the Holy Quran says, refuse to accept the truth because they had earlier denied it. In this respect Sheikh Hasina has shown her mettle in covering her head with a piece of black cloth the moment she came to realise that it is a blessing. and not a burden to break in the way of Allah.

The western cultural scenario, in my opinion, presents two streams: one is represented by Mother Teresa, and the other by Lady Diana. One reflects the noble, and the other the ignoble, one forms the crown of the civilisation. and the other indicates the labyrinth.

And in the East the valiant women of Iran have shown one thing among many others that a head gear is no harassment, nor embarrassment, but a symbol of the exceptional. and excellent role the womanhood has got to play in the scheme of divine drama. It gives an air to the effect that all women are born princesses' all men must strive out of their lowliness to approach them!

It is understandable Sheikh Hasina had to fight, perhaps the hardest battle of her life. to settle on the decision that she should press a cover on her head, comprehension of truth is itself a blessing, practising it opens the flood gate of heavenly grace, and continuing with the commitment once made to Allah is a journey towards perfection.

The length of black cloth covering her head seems to be furred with cloud saturated fully with the raindrops of

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The country is in the midst of an election campaign and such actions had the potential of disturbing peace affecting the election itself. One would certainly withhold any conclusion while the jury is still out. but on the basis of prima facie information, Lt. General Nasim only requested the Supreme Commander to reconsider his decision to retire Maj. Gen. Helal Morshed, Bir Bikram, and Brig. Miran Hamedur Rahman. According to legal experts conversant with Army Rules of discipline and Army code, a number of exiting rules were violated in the episode of May 18-20. The most glaring among those is that the accused were not given an opportunity to defend them-

ence affecting the decisions.

Earlier in Pakistan, following

the assassination of premier

Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951, a co-

terie of people with Gholam

Muhammad and Choudhury

Mohammad Ali in front drove

the last nail into the coffin of

democracy. In Bangladesh up

to 1975, civilians were rela-

tively powerful in Bureaucracy.

But following the 1975 August

tragedy, decision making pro-

cess underwent a change -

lack of transparency was its

hallmark. Thats why retire-

ment of CAS along with two

other officers cannot be by any

stretch of imagination be con-

sidered normal. It is a lame ar-

gument that 70 or so other se-

nior army officers were retired

by Begum Khaleda Zia between

1991-95 without any remon-

strance. That's not true

though. There is resentment

in the army for such retire-

ments which smacked of con-

siderations other than profes-

To have a better under-

sional, as in the present case.

standing please look at the

spontaneous out-cry of foul-

play, nationally and interna

tionally. Now the senior US

State Deptt. desk officer

Patricia Mahoree has joined

gressman Gillman expressing

concern on the actions of 18-

20 May. As a matter of fact the

former government stands

suspect in the eyes of the na

tion for politicizing every or

gan of state machinery

Between 1991-95 over 400

her voice with that of con

senior officials were retired in Aren't they illegal, malafides?

and subordinate responsibility.

which actions were taken the conduct of Japanese troops

similar manner without giving the officers any chance to defend themselves as required under government servants Retirement Rules. The retirement juggernaut military and civil, are thus being questioned nationally and internationally. About loyalty, the less said

the better. Dean Rusk used to say, loyalty up in payment of loyalty down only if it was reasonable. A student of history. the US secretary of state was certainly not unaware of the now famous Yamashita case in the context of Superior Order A military Commission of Yamasthia to death by hanging

American Generals condemned general Yomayuka The hush hush way in for failure to properly control speak of an exogenous influ- under his command in the

Waliur Rahman Philippines. The Yamasthia principle thus departs from the 12th century compiler of canon law, Gratian: "The sol dier who kills a man in obedience to authority is not guilty of murder". Chief Justice John Marshall also declared, that superior orders will justify a subordinate's conduct only 'if not to perform a prohibited act

The former CAS only seems to have followed this tradition in response to the orders of the President. By requesting the Supreme Commander to reconsider the decision, the CAS stood for defending the professional integrity and service security of the Defence Personnel.

In Army, personal honour goes side by side with military valour. Two glorious examples in history are the combat of thirty in 1351 when the French Soldier Beaumanoir asked for a drink eliciting the most memorable reply. 'Drink Thy Blood, Beaumanoir, and Thy thirst will pass. And ear lier in 67 AD, on the fall of the town of Jotapola to the Romans, the Jewish Garrison commander Josephus used military wisdom and sense of

honour to stay alive. It is important to note that there is a political divide in the country. Any controversial action by the government or irresponsible pronouncements by politicians is likely to stir up raw emotions of fear and distrust. The governance of the country in the recent past has

widened the chasm rather than narrowed it. It is at this very critical juncture that the popular upsurge by rejecting the 15th February election, as unrepresentative, set in place the Caretaker Administration. They need our total support in fulfilling the onerous task given to them by the people of

this country. Quarter century on, this country is still in search of a proper identity - the identity she lost on the fateful night of August 15, 1975. The country paid a very heavy price for that. Civil society has almost been destroyed. Societal values have been thrown to the winds. The culture of loot and plunder is gaining ground. The Republic is likely to become a kleptocracy if we fail in our responsibility to give a proper election to the people.

The recent World Bank report about governance in Bangladesh is timely. It we apply our mind to it, we may successfully come away from the brink. The theme of the report is accountability and transparency. Along with the need for strengthening the Parliamentary committees with participation of opposition members, it lays particular emphasis on the role of the Prime Minister as the Chief Executive. With an oblique reference to the non-availability of the former Prime Minister Begum Zia for any question/answer session, the report suggests that such weekly question/answer will help the country and bureaucracy imbibe the culture of accountabil-

ity at a quicker pace. It is in this context that the new CAS Gen. Mahbubur Rahman has to perform his constitutional responsibility Remember how the Civil Society has been vandalished by a mastan-culture. It is incumbent upon all of us to ponder how Yasmeen murder/rape took place, how a government press note to cover it up was issued; why the wheel of justice was so slow in unravelling the Smritikona case. Why it took a year-and-a-half to apprehend the alleged perpetuators who bombed and fired upon the train rear Iswardi carrying political leaders. On how could the fascist style attack on Jagannath Hall take place? Why after 25 years we are still a veritable industrial Diaspora? We must remember that right can never be wrong. We must give a lie to the belief "The right might must prevail over the wrong right!". We seem to be making our journey without any road map. Why students — the future of the country - spend more time outside their classes than in-

side? They ask themselves. inter alia, if election fraud is not penalised, why should cheating in the examination be an offence? If Act of God is invoked so easily to postpone election, why can't the authority do the same thing in postponing examination?

We need to add a moral content to the constitutional imperative. The rallying power of the Rule of Law has been epitomised in Bengal from time immemorial 'dharmer kol batashey noray' - (the mill of justice moves by the wind). Through our respect to the rallying power of law only can we uphold the constitution not outside this. Because our constitution has been so badly mangled, with thirteen amendments to its credit, in the past quarter century, that a former chief justice said 'the constitution is the solemn expression of the people and all powers in the Republic belong to the people. It has tried to make a balance between the majoritarian rule and fundamental rights of individual citizens. The constitution cannot be changed by a group of people, however, vehemently vociforeus it may be. It has already been amended 13 times twice to choose the form of government, thrice to ratify the deeds and actions of extra-constitutional regimes once to glorify an individual and twice to qualify an individual otherwise disqualified. The provisions with regard to the udiciary was changed at wenty places.

joint effort of civil and military bureaucracy to enter into a covenant to save this country. The new CAS may kindly ensure that nothing is done regarding the events of 18-20 May which may overtly or covertly precipitate the situation in the country affecting the June 12 election. Alexander Dubcek told me in Bologna what gave him the moral courage to stand up in front of the Soviet tanks Tanks were unconsistent with democratic values: we ought to know how tanks were brought on the streets of Dhaka without the knowledge of the government, of Bangladesh, We need this in giving a afresh lease to our democratic values

What is needed now is the

Cicero (106-43 BC) stated salus populi suprema est lex the welfare of the people is the ultimate law). The Magna Carta about a millenuim later said, "To no one will we sell, or deny, or delay, right or justice". Together these two pronouncements will help us get direction to the future through a proper understanding of the constitution.

and national aspirations.

It is not the Letter only, but the Spirit that we must inculcate. You cannot be Pope and Luther at the same time. Sir.

lot boxes are mysteriously

Restore the Sovereignty of the Voters

by Kabir U Ahmed

In the first place, voters should tell the vote seeking candidates that they must not come with guns and goons to terrorize them. Because in a democratic system, sovereign voters, who are ordinary citizens, are the final masters and not servants or underdogs or subordinates.

VER the last two months or so, both the non-party caretaker government and the new Election Commission have done an excellent job in creating a peaceful environment for holding a free and fair election on June 12th. From what one gathers from the daily newspapers, one senses that there are tensions, uncertainties and hidden bellicosity among various groups and parties which can at any moment erupt and destroy the prevailing calm in the political arena. One prays that the wisdom and sanity of all the parties and groups will prevail and the dark forces will not be unleashed again before the election. One cherishes the hope that the caretaker government and the Election Commission will succeed, albeit with the support of all well-meaning and patriotic forces in the country, in firmly controlling and administering the pre-poll situations and be able to deliver a fair outcome of the election to the country at the most critical juncture of its history. They deserve everyone's most sincere and wholehearted support and cooperation in successfully completing their tasks since the alternative (i. e. the failure of holding a free and fair election) is fraught with disastrous consequences for the country the scenarios of which one

cannot even imagine. In a situation like this, it seems it is more important for the ordinary voters to tell the candidates and their party activists what they must not do rather than what the voters themselves should do. This observation is made with the best of intentions about the rational outcome of the forthcoming election and is based on an understanding of the long-run voting behaviour of the ordinary citizens of this country. If the vital issues are clearly explained to the voters without any intimidation, terror, monetary bribe and gerrymandering, then the voters are able to pass correct judgments on the critical issues through ballots.

Ordinary voters of this country have demonstrated this political maturity and wisdom time and again. The election results of 1946. 1954, 1970 and 1991 will prove the truth of this statement. (Incidentally, the verdicts of 1965 election would have been very different if Ayub Kharr did not deploy the army, civil bureaucrats and the po-

lice forces to rig the election Had this election been a fair one, the history of the post-1965 period would have been very different). However, there is hardly any room for controversy on the outcomes of these elections. The old classical saying that "have faith in your own people" cannot be more truth-reinforcing, educational and inspirational in any other country than in Bangladesh. At the end of a free, fair and unintimidated campaign, people will give the candidates the crèdits/discredits that they are worth. This is where the candidates and their parties will have to learn their primary political lessons. Ordinary voters, therefore, are their (i.e. the candidates' and their parties') teachers and not their dumb followers. The most important lesson of democracy is that the political leaders have to bow to the wishes of these sovereign voters however economically poor, half-fed and half-clothed they may be. It is this sovereignty of the voters that is trampled under foot in this country most of the time and it is this sovereignty that has to be restored and respected by everyone, no matter how big and important positions these candidates may occupy in the society. However, from

sovereignty of voting rights. certain injunctions follow about what the vote seekers must not do. In the first place, voters should tell the vote seeking candidates that they must not come with guns and goons to terrorize them. Because in a democratic system, sovereign voters, who are ordinary citizens, are the final masters and not servants or underdogs or subordinates. Election is a matter of taking the opinions of the voters and acting according their wishes. and hence not an occasion to bulldoze them. It is an occasion to have an open and free dialogue and exchange of views. Once a candidate approaches the voters with guns and terrorist gang, they are expressing their bestiality and animalism, and not their human behaviour. What the candidates should show is their power of articulation, art of persuasion, intelligence. thoughfulness, understanding of the basic problems of the voters and a sense of mutual respect. In a democracy, voters and candidates are equal although in terms of money and other assets they may be unequal. They should tell the

candidates and their parties:

"Don't come to terrorize us". If they do then the voters should stay away from them which will be a way of expressing their civilised protest. Law of the land should be strict in protecting the voters from victimisation by the terrorists when they express their silent protests. In the second place, voters

should tell the candidates that

they should not try to bribe them with money or other temptations because that is not only demeaning and insulting to their sovereignty but also turn them into something like commodities in the vegetable market. The moment the candidates try to buy the votes with money, they are turning the politics into a trade or commerce. The act of vote purchasing shows that (i) they are unable to persuade the voters with rational logic to vote for them, (ii) they will realise many times more than what they are paying to the voters by abusing their parliamentary positions after they get elected for which the voters themselves will have to pay again in the form of taxes (note the proportion of consumption taxes in the country), and (iii) it is an encouragement to corruption in high political offices. The latter two points are antithetical to what democracy is supposed to achieve. It is supposed to promote the welfare of the people and not exploit them, on the one hand, and provide a clean, fair and accountable government to the people, on the other. Corruption in the high political offices degenerates the entire administration into a mechanism of personal aggrandizement. Corrupt politicians cannot enforce a clean, transparent and accountable administration and hence lack the moral authority to enforce law and order in the country. If such a situation is reached in the country, then the law of jungle will prevail making individual citizen's life, limb and property unsafe. No sensible person would wish to live in such a degraded society. The voters, therefore, should tell the vote-seekers. "No vote for corrupt candidates, and don't come to purchase my vote. In the third place, voters

should guard against any manipulation or impersonation of one voter by another. Fraudulent voting or voting by Mr. X for Mr. Y, is reported to be a common practice and that's why even when the voter turnout is poor, the bal-

filled with ballot papers. Such practices amount to crimes and are punishable under law but are encouraged by some candidates who are desperate to get elected by any means. fair br foul. They can get away with it by using their money and influence. Ordinary voters under the threat of local musclemen, who act as the middlemen of the candidates for money, may be subjected to such behaviour. But if the terrorists and the black money can be brought under control by the Election Commission, then the voters themselves will not have any incentive to cast false votes for nothing. A sense of sovereign right of votes which engenders self-respect among the voters should motivate them to tell the candidates. "No false voting of any kind". If the voters are forced by the local musclemen, then they should have the courage, of course at some risk, to report it to the Polling Officers. Again the law of the land should be powerful enough to protect the voters before and after the poll from victimisation by the candidates or their agents. No one would be foolish

enough to think that voters under the present socio-economic and political conditions will be able to exercise their rights as have been stated and analysed above. The powers of the organised terrorist group. black money, and the rural landowning and moneyed class may be overwhelming which makes it extremely risky for them to behave according to their best interests. But if one has to accept democracy as the only political system to be practiced in the country, then the proper democratic values that engender democratic behaviour among the citizens will have to be cultivated. This is how a democratic political culture can be developed in the country. Democracy teaches tolerance, respect for other's views, non-interference in another individual's choice, right of expressions and thought, non-intimidation, one-man one-vote, secret ballot, respect for law, representative system of government. and independence of judiciary etc. It is at the grassroots level that these democratic values and practices will have to be injected and protected by all possible means. Otherwise, the practice of democracy and free and fair election will remain a willow-the- wisp for the country for ever.