

News Analysis

Is politics going out of the hands of politicians?

By Nurul Kabir

Some findings of a recent opinion poll, especially those relating to "patronisation" of hoodlums by candidates in the ensuing elections, are alarming enough to cause headache to many who sincerely want to see that the coming general elections are held in a free and fair atmosphere.

Another finding that sheds light on the socio-economic status of the candidates is bound to appear as a disturbing fact for those who believe in the peoples' participatory approach towards democracy and development.

The findings, together with the report that only 21 per cent of the candidates are politicians, poses a serious question: Is politics going out of the hands of politicians?

The opinion poll, conducted countrywide by the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), reveals that the political parties in general have developed a "tendency to sponsor hoodlums" at an increased rate over the last five years. According to the survey, 34 per cent of the nominees of various political parties are "sponsoring hoodlums". In 1991, the percentage, on an average, was 21.

What is more alarming is that, according to the PPRC survey, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Awami League (AL), the two major parties, are desperately contending for state-power, have "substantially increased their patronisation of the criminal elements". The BNP's "patronisation of hoodlums" increased to 49 per cent this year from 11 per cent in 1991 while that of the AL rose to 34 per cent from 18 per cent.

The political economy of sponsoring hoodlums suggests that the parties concerned might try to use these goons to achieve their ultimate target to take to power. In a market economy, one cannot get anything without money. It is, therefore,

presumably the political parties had to invest money to ensure loyalty of the thugs. On the other hand, an investor always tries to make sure that his or her investment is realised with adequate returns in due course. How do the hired hoodlums pay back effectively their political masters during an election? Electoral history says: By making attempts to rig polls in favour of their patrons.

The alarming increase in the political patronisation of hoodlums, as shown by the PPRC opinion poll has made the Election Commission's task of holding a free and fair election difficult.

The PPRC survey further shows that only four per cent of the candidates come from the low income groups. Of the rest, 34 per cent come from the middle class and 62 per cent from the upper class.

The statistics indicate that the lowest number of candidates come from the poor, the majority of our population. Conversely, the highest number of candidates come from the wealthy ones, the minority in our society. The picture becomes more clear when we look into the professions of the candidates. Forty-four per cent of the candidates are big industrialists and businessmen, twenty-eight per cent professionals, twenty-two per cent politicians, four per cent small traders and three per cent peasants.

Even if we take almost an absurd proposition for granted that all the candidates coming from the low income groups would win the polls, the representation of the vast majority of our population in Jatiya Sangsad would be terribly low. Clearly, majority of our people stand little chance to have laws enacted in their favour.

Under such circumstances, the fashionable concept of the people's participatory approach towards development,

as well as the task of building democratic institutions, would definitely suffer in this country. Because, it is very unlikely that the masses would feel inspired to take an active part in the development process under the guidance of those who are alienated from the people. Besides, 35 per cent of the candidates are permanent residents of the capital city. It would be almost impossible for the absentee MPs to enthuse the masses even for a pro-people programme.

The socio-economic background, as well as professional identities of the candidates, as we have hinted earlier, a very important question: Is politics going out of the hands of politicians? The answer, according to the PPRC survey, is yes. Only 21 per cent of the candidates contesting this year for the 300 JS seats are politicians.

The high commands of the major political parties this time have shown the tendency of awarding party nominations to moneyed men, irrespective of the candidates' political career. By doing so, as it appears, the politicians themselves have been exposed to lose their grounds in their respective parties.

The fact, combined with the findings that 44 per cent of the candidates are big industrialists and businessmen and 35 per cent are permanent residents of the capital city, however, provide us with some explanations for the nominees' patronisation of the hoodlums: When the candidates are isolated from their electorate, they cannot wholly rely on the voters for winning the elections.

Our weekly feature 'Down to Earth' has been dropped today for unavoidable reasons. We regret inconvenience caused to readers.

Violation of Code of Conduct
AL complains against
Biswas with EC today

The Awami League yesterday accused President Abdur Rahman Biswas of violating election code of conduct by making commitment to convert a college of Barisal to a full-fledged university, reports UNB.

Awami League will lodge a formal complaint in this regard with the Election Commission today said SAMS Kibria briefing newsmen yesterday.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas Thursday held out an assurance that the government would be turned into a university in near future.

The assurance of the President came while talking

to a 30-member delegation of the college, who called on him at Bangladesh on Thursday.

Kibria, the political adviser of Awami League president Sheikh Hasina, said the Electoral Enquiry Committees were summoning everyone who violates the code of conduct. "President's commitment is a clear violation of Clause-3 of the code of conduct," he pointed out.

It is to be noted that President's son, Dr Nasim Biswas, is contesting the June 12 election from the constituency where the college is located, he told newsmen.

Drawing the attention of the Election Commission, Kibria wondered "how a person occupying the highest office of the state can violate code of conduct."

Not only this commitment to convert a college to a university but the President's recent visit to the constituency of his son should also be taken as violation of the code of conduct since it was "ostensibly designed to influence the voters", said the AL leader.

C'wealth team
splits into 6
groups today

The Commonwealth Observer Group, arrived in Dhaka Tuesday, will be split into six teams today to watch election campaign and polling in different parts of the country, reports UNB.

The 12-member team, which came at the invitation of the caretaker government, will disperse to each of the country's six administrative regions, said a press release yesterday.

The team leader, Tan Sri Mohd. Ghazali Shafie, a former Foreign Minister of Malaysia, will stay in the capital with one of its members, Ms Alice Killam, an electoral officer from Canada, to watch the campaign and balloting in the city and its adjoining areas.

Three observers — Justin McLaughlin, chief election officer from St Lucia, Johannah-Joy Phumpani, a member of parliament from Botswana, and Dr Kanwaljit Soan, an MP from Singapore, will go to the port city of Chittagong.

Historic June 7

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Rahman at the Bangladesh Bhaban at Dhanmondi in the city.

On this day in 1966, some political activists were killed by the then Pakistani autocrat Ayub Khan as Bengalees gave call for a general strike and tried to organize a rally for realisation of the six-point demand and release of its architect Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The agitations for realisation of the historic six-point demand under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman turned into a mass upsurge in 1969 which culminated in the War of Independence in 1971.

Special prayers were offered at mosques and other places of worship on the day seeking divine blessings, peace and progress of the country and for holding of the coming election in a peaceful manner.

Speakers at a discussion meeting at the AL central office said that the movement for realisation of the six-point demand had led to the emergence of Bangladesh. They also explained the historical background of formulation of the six-point demand in the then Pakistan.

City AL office secretary and president of Jol Bangla Sangskritik Oikya Jote, Salahuddin Badal, presided over the meeting. The discussants included SAMS Kibria, political adviser to AL chief Sheikh Hasina, AL office secretary Sayed Fazul Haq, publicity secretary Mozaffar Hussain Paltu, Mustafa Sarwar, Dr Harun-ur-Rashid, Habibur Rahman Milon, Dr Mizanur Rahman, Nurul Fazal Bulbul and Sheikh Abdul Kader.

From Page 1

napped yesterday evening as a sequel to a family feud and kept in a house at the village.

Champa's family members upon hearing the incident, reported to the Nakla thana police. A five-member police team led by one ASI raided the house. The captors fled away after an exchange of shots.

Nakla thana is about 52 kms off Sherpur town.

Hasina

From Page 1

ernments at union, thana and district levels on the basis of people's elected representatives, she said this is necessary to take the administration to the doorsteps of commonmen.

The Awami League, if voted to power, will set up health complexes in every nook and corner of the country to spread the health care facilities for the suffering millions to remote inaccessible parts in the countryside.

She concluded her address by requesting people to cast their votes for the boat.

The AL chief introduced her party candidates Fakhrul Islam Munshi (Comilla-4), Yusuf Abdulla Harun (Comilla-3), Alhaj Shah Alam (Brahmanbaria-4), Advocate Lutful Hye (Brahmanbaria-3), Abdul Halim (Brahmanbaria-2) and Sayedul Haq (Brahmanbaria-1) at different meetings in their respective constituencies.

Later, Sheikh Hasina addressed a number of public meetings at Habiganj, Chunarughat, Shayestaganj and Srimangal at night.

Addressing a huge gathering at Srimangal, she said if voted to power, her party would try to improve the lot of the labourers of tea gardens and fix wages for them keeping consistency with the prices of essentials.

The Awami League President also said that her party would make efforts for the survival of the fishermen and to protect flash flood in the region.

Sheikh Hasina will address public meetings at different places in Moulvibazar, Sylhet and Sunamganj districts tomorrow (Saturday).



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PHILIPS

Reported influx
of people from
across border
worries BNP

The Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Dal (BNP) vented concern over the reported influx of thousands of people everyday into the country from across the border to cast votes in the coming election, reports UNB.

This is a dangerous situation, detrimental to the interest of Bangladesh, said a party spokesman citing press reports on the intrusion.

Talking to newsmen at the party's Kakrail office yesterday evening, Zahiruddin Khan, chairman of the BNP's national election coordination committee, urged the government to take measure immediately to stop the influx.

He also sought an official version on the issue from the Election Commission.

Khan called upon all nationalist and patriotic forces to resist the 'dangerous games' to sabotage the election.

One wanted
in 25 cases
arrested

By Staff Correspondent

Two persons including one Md Rafiq, wanted in more than 25 cases with different thanas of the city, were arrested from near the Baridhara bridge late night Thursday, police said yesterday.

Following the confessional statements of Rafiq and his accomplice Zahid, Gulshan thana police also recovered one pistol and one cut rifle with ten bullets from South Manikdi area under Cantonment thana on the same night, police said. Acting on their statements, Dhanmondi police also recovered 29 cocktails from Manikdi area yesterday morning, police said.

EC warns

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An independent candidate of Narayanganj-4, Jamaat-i-Islami candidate of Pirojpur-1, Awami League candidate of Naogaon-5 and Jamaat-i-Islami candidate of Bagerhat-2, the press release said.

The Midnight File

Demirel asks pro-Islamic party leader to form govt

ANKARA, June 7: Turkish President Suleyman Demirel today asked Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of the pro-Islamic Welfare Party, to form a new government, Anatolia news agency reported. Demirel's decision comes on the heels of the resignation Thursday of Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz following the breakup of his coalition, reports AFP.

Shahabuddin murder
Zulu remanded
for 7 days

By Staff Correspondent

Shihazul Huq alias Zulu, arrested in connection with the Shahabuddin murder case, was produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court yesterday which placed him on seven days police remand.

Another accused in the case, Salimuddin alias Sallu who was arrested on the day of the killing on May 31, was also produced before the court after the end of four days' remand yesterday. He was sent to jail, police said.

Police so far arrested two — Zulu and Sallu — of the 10 accused named in the FIR with Mohammadpur thana following the murder.

Zaker Party
against power
politics

By Staff Correspondent

The Zaker Party does not believe in power politics and is not participating in the June 12 general elections to go to power, said party chairman Mostafa Amir Faisal while addressing an election projection meeting at Matlab in Chandpur district yesterday, according to press release issued here last night.

It is part of our struggle to change the lot of the masses through bringing about economic development, he said.

The meeting, held to campaign for party nominee Alhaj MA Sadek, was presided over by Alhaj MA Samad and addressed by, among others, Rashidul Hossain, political adviser of the party chief.

Hasina's polls
campaign tour

President of Bangladesh Awami League Sheikh Hasina will address electioneering meetings at various places under Sunamganj, Sylhet and Moulvibazar districts today, reports BSS.

She will stay at Sylhet overnight and in the morning of June 9, she will leave Sylhet for Ishwardi of electioneering campaign, a party press release said here yesterday.

Khaleda

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she said her government had implemented various development programmes in the district, but the opposition members were engaged in anti-people activities by deserting parliament.

The BNP chairperson, in her electioneering tour today came to Dinajpur from Bogra and addressed nearly a dozen public meetings and wayside rallies in Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Dinajpur and Joypurhat districts.

Although she passed through Rangpur district, Begum Zia did not address any rally in Rangpur or Kurigram. She only offered feteha at Rega Pirer mazar in Rangpur.

During the meetings, she introduced to the people party candidates Abdul Mannan Mondal (Gaibandha-4), Engineer Shahreen Islam Tuhin (Nilphamari-1), Dewan Nurunnabi (Nilphamari-2), Mohammad Abdul Halim (Dinajpur-4) and Khurshid Jahan Haq (Dinajpur-3).

She stayed in Naogaon to address public meetings and wayside rallies in different parts of the district tomorrow (Saturday).

25.5 m infected

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health care." Ninety per cent of HIV and AIDS cases line in developing countries, with sub-Saharan Africa being hardest hit. There, UNAIDS estimates, 13.3 million adults — or more than 20 per cent of the population — are HIV infected.

"Heterosexual transmission accounts for the majority of infections in the region," it said, "while transmission through blood transfusions accounts for less than 10 per cent."

East Asia and the Pacific, which includes China's one billion people, apparently has "fewer than 50,000 adults" with HIV or AIDS.

In North America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, the HIV case count stands at 1.2 million with Australia facing an affliction rate of 0.12 per cent.

The single hardest-hit country is Botswana, with an adult prevalence rate of more than 18 per cent.

In northern Africa and the Middle East, the figure is 0.12 per cent.

One bright spot is a decline in the number of new HIV cases to emerge in the United States, where AIDS first came to light in 1981 in the homosexual community.

There, some 40,000 new cases are being discovered per year, compared with 100,000 a few years ago.

CEC

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when summoned by Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, Presiding Officers or Magistrates on duty, he added.

He also said polling would be suspended at centres disturbed by acts of terrorism. Abu Hena said he stood determined to resort to suspension of polling in the face of terrorism.

"Polling will be held twice or thrice if necessary to enable voters to cast their votes without let or hindrance," the CEC said expressing his determination three days ahead of the general elections.

He appreciated marked changes in the attitude of political parties. The code of conduct formulated by the Election Commission is backed by moral sanction of political parties.

He said political parties and their candidates were by and large trying their best to abide by the code of conduct. This signals a bright future for democracy in this country.

The CEC also referred to actions being taken against candidates for violating the election code of conduct. Those candidates are being warned against violation of the code of conduct and also being summoned to explain the causes of their violation.

Abu Hena concluded with a note of optimism that the election would be free, fair and peaceful.

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Recording of JP
leader's speech
today

By Staff Correspondent

Recording of the speech of Jatiya Party leader for broadcast over radio and television is scheduled for today, according to an earlier official programme.

As part of the election campaign, heads of the parties with at least 30 candidates have been given opportunity to put forward their party programmes over the state-run radio and television.

But Saeed Tarik, a president member of the JP when contacted told The Daily Star that they were not officially informed anything about the scheduled recording till last night.

10 political activists
held in Jhalakathi

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, June 7: Jhalakathi police on Wednesday arrested ten activists of Awami League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jatiya Party and sent them to jail hajat the same night.

Police said they were arrested under Special Powers Act.

Policeman killed

From Page 1

napped yesterday evening as a sequel to a family feud and kept in a house at the village.

Champa's family members upon hearing the incident, reported to the Nakla thana police. A five-member police team led by one ASI raided the house. The captors fled away after an exchange of shots.

Nakla thana is about 52 kms off Sherpur town.

Most Indian parties

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grown among the Indian people after the emergence of the BJP as a principal party.

"But the encouraging thing is that the BJP votes are confined to certain parts of the country and the BJP won because of the mistakes made by Congress."

The Professor pointed out that BJP had faced a long term setback by agreeing to form the government first. "Now that it could not muster the confidence vote it had disillusioned its supporters and sympathisers."

Dr Ganguly, however, warned that if the BJP came to power ever, there would be religious incitement and other fundamentalist forces in the region would gain momentum. "It would have a very adverse effect in the area."

Dr Ganguly predicted that the present government in India led by Prime Minister Deve Gowda would survive two years.

Both Gowda and External Affairs Minister I K Gujral would make a relentless effort to improve relations with its neighbours. "They would endeavour to lower the level of tension in the region," he said.

The visiting scholar said that outstanding problems between Bangladesh and India required to be solved on the basis of multilateral discussions where necessary. He felt that the water issue could be settled amicably if it was done at a multilateral level.

"Nepal should be brought in at the behest of India at the water talks with Bangladesh. It would be beneficial to all three countries for tapping hydro-electricity production, flood control and water management," he said.

Dr Ganguly felt that the challenge of fundamentalism could be contained in the region as across the world if civil governments continued to meet the increasing expectations of the people.

Turning to Indian politics, he said: "The neglected and deprived classes have started to speak out. And they must be given the opportunity of participation in both nation building and governance. That is both the challenge and the essence of democracy."

জাকের পার্টির চেয়ারম্যান মোস্তফা আমীর ফয়সলের আহবান



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বাংলাদেশ গড়ে
তোলার লক্ষ্যে

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প্রতীক

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রায় প্রদান
করুন



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