

DHAKA-10 BY-ELECTION

Thoughts on Election Commission



RASHED KHAN MENON

THE by-election to Dhaka-10 constituency of the Jatiya Sangsad is over. The four-party candidate, and a close aide of Prime Minister, Alhaj Mosaddeq Ali Fahu has been declared elected. His election result was gazetted in record time and his swearing in was done in such haste that nobody from the press could know it. These were so quickly done probably to avoid legal action by his opponent Major Mannan who threatened to go to court to nullify the election on charge of its being grossly rigged and unfair.

On the part of Fahu the election may be over but not on the part of the people because this election has left such a big scar on their psyche. They would remember it for a long time for the ingenuity in vote rigging and unhindered manipulation featuring it all. Actually, the whole process of manipulation started when the returning officer, by flouting the election rules and convention, refused to allocate 'Kula' symbol to Bikalpa Dhara candidate Major Mannan. A long legal battle ensued which saw the postponement of the election by the High Court until a decision was reached by the court. In that legal battle also the government and the election commission stood on the wrong

side and tried to manipulate it, too. But due to the fortunate intervention of the highest court, the matter was set right and the opposition candidate's rightful claim to the 'Kula' symbol was conceded. But that did not end the harassment of the opposition candidate as his election campaign was disrupted by occasional attacks by hoodlums of the ruling alliance. And, what happened on the election day was more than a nightmare.

It was rumoured that the ruling party would not allow this seat to be

election duty either became willing partners or succumbed to such violation of election rules and norms.

The most ingenuitous part of the election game was the assembling of voters from different areas outside the constituency and voting by them with impunity. The election observers like Fema, Broti, JANIPOP and others said that 60 per cent of the votes cast were false and the election rules were observed more in violation than in compliance.

This election, therefore, has brought into question again

ence of the Dhaka-10 by-election has shown.

Actually, the Election Commission has faltered from the very beginning of this election process. The Dhaka city, not to speak of this constituency alone, was flashed with colour posters, huge banners, bill boards etc. by the ruling party candidate in violation of the election law and rules. The Election Commission did not do anything except for issuing a press warning. Also during the legal battle that ensued on the question of

menting its own laws and rules as well as its constitutional authority shows how weak it is and as such would bend under any pressure. This really has happened and people saw an election where its guardian, the Election Commission, not only remained a mute spectator, but at the same time proved itself a willing partner in such a game.

This election has also shown that the main political parties have not learnt anything from history. Actually such rigging of election is not a new thing for BNP and it had to

cratic path and to establishing the process of free and fair election. But it has been forgotten since then. The elections that were held after the changeover to democratic system deteriorated further down the line. The provision of the non-partisan caretaker government could not keep itself above controversy.

So, time has come when total overhauling of the election system and the Election Commission has become necessary. The parties in the political arena must agree to that. A national convention can be held where every aspect of election will be discussed and decisions taken for reforms. The constitutional provision of the independence of the Election Commission should be invoked so that the commission can work without interference by the ruling party and the government gives it full support and cooperation. The election rules must also be changed in the light of the experience of the last decade.

A holistic approach needs to be taken to strengthen the Election Commission and make it truly independent. Otherwise the election process would see the periodic rape of polls like that of Dhaka-10 by-election and at some point of time people would find it unnecessary to hold this farce at the cost of their purse and time. And, with it, whatever remains of democracy, would wither away.

The failure on the part of the Election Commission both in implementing its own laws and rules as well as its constitutional authority shows how weak it is and as such would bend under any pressure. This really has happened and people saw an election where its guardian, the Election Commission, not only remained a mute spectator, but at the same time proved itself a willing partner in such a game.

taken by the opposition and as such apprehending manipulation the opposition candidate Major Mannan went to High Court for giving directive to the government to post army at the polling centres as requested by the election commission. The High Court gave the order and the Election Commission was also informed by the government that in compliance with that order five members of the armed forces would be deployed in each of the election centres. But, to the surprise of all, the government violated the order of High Court and army could be seen only patrolling the streets and only in some centres where high-ups might turn out for voting. Except that all the centres were left open to the supporters and activists of the four-party alliance; and allegedly under the presence and guidance of BNP MPs and leaders each and every centre became their free ground. The officials on the

whether a neutral election can be held under a ruling government. But even if a caretaker government is provided for a general election, there cannot be such arrangement made for each and every by-election. This brings the role of the Election Commission on to the forefront. Actually, the concept of a caretaker government was visualised during anti-military regime movement for smooth transfer of power and for time to reconstruct the Election Commission so that it can get strong enough to hold free and fair election. The provision of caretaker government ultimately got incorporated in the constitution due to the bitter experience of elections under a ruling government. But the question of an independent and strong Election Commission remains valid; for without such a commission no genuine election can be held any time as the experi-

allocation of election symbol, the EC could not rein in the said officer and also the officers of the commission, who in violation of the election rules and norms openly tried to manipulate the election in favour of the ruling party candidate.

The EC also failed to pursue its own request to the government to make arrangement for the posting of the members of the armed forces in every centre as it considered each of them vulnerable. It is the candidate who went to court to get a direction when the Election Commission could assert its position on the basis of the constitution where it is clearly written in the clause 120 that 'The President shall, when so requested by the Election Commission, make available to it such staff as may be necessary for the discharge of its functions under this part.'

The failure on the part of the Election Commission both in imple-

pay very heavily by way of losing power and conceding to the demand of the opposition for a caretaker government in the aftermath of the rigged Magura election.

This does not bode well for the democratic process. If the electoral process is done away with like this, then what remains of democracy which these parties talk about in their bid to prove themselves democratic?

The people of Bangladesh have the experience of vote dacoity, media coup, capture of centres and filling the boxes with pre-sealed ballots. This led to the struggle for a free and fair election. This struggle was heightened during the autocratic regime of General Ershad when people saw the rape of election process to its worst extreme. This actually resulted in the historic declaration of the three alliances devoted to bringing the country on to a demo-

LEST WE FORGET

Golam Mowla
A pioneer of insurance

FAIZ MOHAMMED



BORN on 23rd March in 1920 he passed away on 4th July 1984. Although many he his life was short lived; his achievements are more than what many of us can attain in two of our lifetimes. Born among eight brothers, and well educated studying in the Presidency College, Calcutta, he was a well driven man and later became the pioneer of insurance in Bangladesh. Always willing to help people he was a man of great compassion and benevolence.

He was a family man with a strong belief in family values. He was a devoted father and a loving husband. I (his grand son) was very young when he passed away and my memory of him is vague. I remember he had a very active social life and had many good friends. People loved his company for his witty sense of humour. He had an excellent sartorial sense and gourmet taste.

I was only five years old when I lost him, but I remember in snatches how he used to help me with my spellings so that I would be spared from my mother's wrath, how he sat by my side in the middle of the night when I was sick and at times he would pick me up and place the floor to put me back to sleep again.

In the professional world he was known for his high morals and strong principles. He started his career working for Oriental Fire (India) till 1964. He opened his own insurance company, Great Eastern Insurance, in 1966. In the 60's he, along with two of his friends started a rolling machine factory (GMG). As this was not a success they sold it to late Mr. Aziz Sattar (at present the prosperous

GMG Airlines). Right before the Liberation he became the chairman of R.C.D. During the liberation war, to save him from the hands of the Pakistan army, a special RCD meeting was arranged by Dr. A.R. Sahib (personal journalist of the late Shah of Iran). So during the liberation he was taken out of the country. And he stayed in London till January '72 when he came back with late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to a liberated Bangladesh.

Nana Bhai dedicated his life to insurance. He was shattered when all the insurance companies along with his were nationalised in 1972, and he did not want to continue any more. But the then government would not take "no" for an answer. He was chosen as the first Managing Director of Shadharan Bima Corporation. After his retirement he carried on with his social works. He was an active Rotarian, and was president of the Rotary Club from 1961-1962. He will always be remembered as the great man he was in the hearts of the people whose lives he has touched. I would consider myself an accomplished person if I could become half the man he was.

Career Opportunity

Business Automation Limited leading Software Development Company is looking for some dynamic persons for the following position.

Position : Customer Relationship Manager

Responsibilities : Have to develop relationship and understand client challenges in order to position our solutions in a manner that will be valued by clients. Also have the ability to coordinating the efforts of a small sales force to increase sales.

Qualifications : MBA (preferably from IBA) or Masters with major in MIS/Marketing, with no 3rd division/class and at least two 1st division/class. Must have excellent skill in Business Communications. At least 3 years of experience in Marketing. Must have the ability to use computer applications including the advanced functions of Power Point, Excel, MS Word.

Position : Executive Business Development

Responsibilities : Have to write proposals, collect and review of various tenders and complete all the formalities independently for such participation.

Qualifications : MBA (preferably from IBA) or Masters with major in MIS/Management, with no 3rd division/class and at least two 1st division/class. Must have excellent skill in English Business Communications. At least 1 year's experience in similar job. Must have the ability to use computer applications including the advanced functions of Power Point, Excel, MS Word.

Position : Customer Relationship Officer

Responsibilities : Have to arrange product demonstration and to sale products independently. Also maintain liaisons with our Clients.

Qualifications : MBA or Masters' in Marketing/Management from reputed University with excellent academic background. Skill in both written and spoken English. Experience in Software Development Company will be given preference. Must have the ability to use computer applications such as Power Point, Excel, MS Word.

Position : System Analyst

Responsibilities : Able to prepare detail specifications from which programs will be written. Must have strong Management & Leadership skills. Task includes developing, maintaining software and coordinating with other teams and team members.

Qualifications : Bachelor's degree in Computer Science/Information Systems or equivalent, 5 years experience in relevant field. Must be skilled in VB6.0, VB, NET, MSSQL, XML, ORACLE, Crystal Report, WIN API, VISIO, and UML.

Position : Web Developer

Responsibilities : Developing, maintaining, enhancing, and administering corporate client's websites. Ensure the timely updating and editing of various developed sites. Recommend any beneficial or necessary Web site enhancements/changes to the clients.

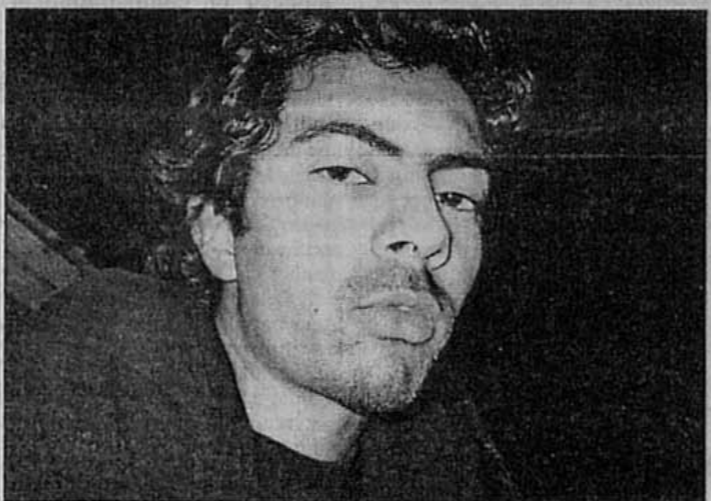
Qualifications : Graduate preferably in Computer Science with at least 2 years experience in similar field. Must be skilled on PHP, MS-SQL, Linux, UML, DHTML/XML, Electronic Transaction, Dreamweaver, Photoshop, MacroMedia Flash, CSS, JSP, Struts Methodology.

If you think you are the right person then send your application and detail C.V along with two copies of recent passport size photographs to Human Resource Department BSRB Bhaban (9th floor), 12 Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215 on or before 17 July 2004.

American dissent: Ricardo Cortes

'I am one of millions who love this country...I am hopeful that the American public will speak their votes to rid our Presidency of the administration that currently rules'

Ricardo Cortes is the founder of New York-based Magic Propaganda Mill. He is a political activist, drug-law reformer, anti-war activist and all-round creative personality. His art has always been genre-bending, but his recent series of political T-shirts have taken the message to a new level. From "Anyone but Bush" to "Out of Iraq" and "I Love Iraq" (using that familiar I Love NY look), his T-shirts carry a direct message and call to action. In the midst of planning his next project, Ricardo took a break to answer a few questions from his Brooklyn neighbour, Naeem Mohaiemen, New York correspondent for The Daily Star



The Daily Star (DS): Rico, tell us about the anti-war T-shirt project. What designs have you made? How do you distribute them? What's your main intention here?

Ricardo Cortes (RC): My intention is to use my company and our design skills to engage the cultural dialogue with a bit more relevance and immediacy in light of the political climate.

That is to say, we are a pop culture vehicle: Magic Propaganda Mill makes skateboards and creates record covers like countless other firms that are part of the US youth movement. However, I recognise that power and influence and hope to use our appeal to spread information and political thought along with our visual aesthetic.

The "anti-war" T-shirts contain strong political messages that I'm happy to say have found an audience of enthusiasm in the U.S. and abroad. We began by subverting Milton Glaser's ubiquitous "I Love NY" logo with "Iraq" shortly before the initial invasion, to express our solidarity with the people of Iraq. The responses were extreme -- both in support and in anger. It was an interesting indication of the real motives of many pro-war people -- that they expressed such hatred to a message of love (and a message of love toward the people that they wanted to "liberate," at that).

We periodically release a new image whenever we have an idea to offer. As you mention, our latest is "Out of Iraq," a play on the Robert Redford film "Out of Africa" from which we took the font for the slogan. Our shirts are available in some shops in New York and on our website, <http://www.magicpropagandamill.com>.

DS: I notice that one of your designs is "I Defend Iraq," with an image of a broken machine gun underneath. That's pretty intense, have you actually given that to anyone? In fact, you've slightly misread a shirt that was intentionally confusing. The "After-War Party" (I Defend Iraq) T-shirt is actually a combination of two separate designs. The first is the "I Love Iraq" design and the second is "Defend Westchester." Westchester is an affluent suburb of New York, and we made a T-shirt about it in response to a "Defend Brooklyn" T-shirt that explored gentrification issues in Brooklyn. By combining these two designs I made a shirt that mixed the images of "Love," "Defend," "Westchester," "Iraq," and guns beyond recognition.

The T-shirt is very confusing, and it seemed to fit, as it mirrored our very unclear mission in Iraq. The shirt's distorted message also made some people who wore it more comfortable, as it was in some ways a muted and safer way of advertising their discontent (many people have expressed fear of wearing the simple "I Love Iraq" shirt in mixed company, the After War Party shirt often elicited confusion rather than anger and gave the wearer a better opportunity to articulate their politics).

DS: Tell me about your other projects. What is Peace With Police all about? What are your views on the drug war and what drug-law campaigns are you involved with?

RC: Working to end the Drug War is a priority of my work. The War is a long, drawn out failure that has done nothing but to hurt our communities (offering prisons, police harassment, and intolerance) without helping their real problems with "drugs" at all. The War has also been used as a justification by the U.S. government to increase its military presence around the globe. I am not

a fan of the carnage it has perpetuated, and I'm endlessly frustrated that mainstream media has allowed it to continue for so long. Fortunately, more and more people are speaking out against the war, and with some surprises amongst the ranks.

Peace With Police is my effort to work with police officers who oppose the drug war. It is a refuge for those within and without the law enforcement community who want to end a war that has failed the citizenry, depleted our police force and most importantly, stretched the risk to cops lives to a breaking point. In addition to the Peace With Police work, I'm currently finishing production on a children's book about marijuana, "It's Just a Plant." The book is for parents who want to speak honestly and frankly about the dangers and benefits of marijuana. Its aim is to help parents educate their children about marijuana in an honest and responsible way, and the book gives parents an alternative to politically influenced misinformation about the drug that permeates mainstream resources. You can see more about this project at the book's website, <http://www.justaplant.com>.

DS: As an American, what is your overall view on "Pax Americana" and the present push by the neo-cons in Bush White House to create a new form of Global Empire?

RC: I am optimistic. I think there is a much, much greater force of dissent against the Bush administration than is being reported in mainstream media. It will be a wicked and likely corrupt election (it is widely acknowledged that Bush didn't "win" the last election, but stole it through political connections and dirty tricks), but I am hopeful that the masses of the American public, the true patriots of freedom, will speak their votes in an onslaught that cannot be covered

up, to rid our Presidency of the administration that currently rules. It will then be up to Mr. John Kerry to pick up the slack and not be a rubberstamp for the same type of agenda.

DS: Any other thoughts on any other fronts?

RC: How about a quote I like? "The establishment clause forbids a state to hide behind the application of a formally neutral criteria and remain studiously oblivious to the effects of its actions." That's from a Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Supreme Court ruling.

Japan Study Center
University of Dhaka
Dhaka-1000

Admission Notice

Applicants are invited from intending candidates for admission into the Post Graduate Diploma in Japanese Studies Program (Session: 2004-2005). This program offers an extensive coursework on Japan's politics, economy, society and culture. The functional competence in Japanese language will also be provided. Successful completion of this diploma will enable the students for MA, M Phil and PhD in Japanese Studies. The application criteria and procedures are given below.

Applicants having at least 2nd Class Bachelor (Hons) Degree or Second Class Master Degree in any discipline may apply. Applicants who appeared in the Bachelor (Hons) Degree examinations in the universities are also eligible to apply. Applicants having any third division/ class in academic life cannot apply.

The selection of students will be made on basis of performances in the written test, viva-voce and weighted score in the past examinations.

The applicants will have to collect the prescribed application forms from the office of the Japan Study Center (JSC), Room No-1035 (Ground Floor), Arts Building on payment of Tk 300.00 (Three hundred only) during the working hours from July 7, 2004. The last date of submission of application is July 31, 2004.

The admission test will be held on 6 August from 10 AM-11 AM at the Arts Building of Dhaka University.
Class Time: 5 PM-6:30 PM.

Contact Address
Professor Dr M Aaur Rahman
Director
Japan Study Center, 1037 Arts Building
University of Dhaka
Tel: 9661920 Ext. 4462

GD-08

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
Undergraduate Admission

Fall 2004

Admission Test:
23 July 2004

Application Deadline:
20 July 2004

B.Arch (Bachelor in Architecture: 5-year program)
BBA (Major: Marketing, Intl. Business, MIS, HRM, Business Strategy, Finance & Accounting)
BS in Computer Science
BS in Computer Engineering
BS in Electronic & Telecommunication Engineering
BS in Economics
BA in English
BA/BS in Environmental Studies

Requirements
At least 2nd division (in both S.S.C and H.S.C) or GPA 2.5 in both S.S.C & H.S.C exam. GPA 2.5 in three subjects in O-Level and 2.0 in two subjects in A-Levels (A=5...E=1)
Candidates appeared in H.S.C or A levels are eligible to sit for the Admission Test

Full tuition waiver and exemption from admission test for candidates

(1) with GPA 4.75 or above in both SSC & HSC for the students of Arts & Commerce group
(2) with GPA of 5.00 or A+ in both SSC & HSC for the students of science group
(3) who earned 7 A's in O-level (5 at a time) and 3 A's in A-level
(4) who stood first or second in HSC (old system)

Candidates with highest and second highest scores in the admission test will receive full tuition waiver

Special Lab Facilities
NSU has 9 state-of-the-art computer labs equipped with 330 PCs, 31 Workstations and 50 Sun Thin Clients.

a. Digital Lab b. Basic Electronics Lab
c. Networking lab d. Programming lab
e. Database lab
- GIS & ENV Labs
- Fully Automated library with Cyber Corner with 21 Workstations

Applications with minimum scores of 1200 in SAT and 550 in TOEFL (213 CBT)/5.5 in IELTS (with no sub-score below 5.0) are exempted from admission test

For information please contact:
NSU Front Office (Sunday - Thursday)
12 Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani, Dhaka-1213
Ph: 880-2-9885611-20 Fax: 880-2-882-3030
Email: registrar@northsouth.edu
www.northsouth.edu