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## People, politics and democracy



Politics is for the people or the people are for politics-- it has become a question in the changed circumstances in the country. Politicians should engage themselves in politics for the betterment of the masses, but they see nothing beyond their own benefits. Politics has become a dirty business -- it is no longer a noble profession.

Democracy has given the politicians an opportunity to do politics in order to speak for the people, but they are not concerned about the people that they represent. Instead, they get involved in corrupt practices and find out ways to be reelected!

People want peace, prosperity, justice, a corruption-free, violence-free and exploitation-free society where the gap between the rich and the poor will be minimal. But their dream has not come true.

If this caretaker government takes harsh action against the corrupt, terrorists and their godfathers, the nation will be benefited. Above all, democracy will be meaningful and there will be an environment to nurture it.

**Mohammad Ali**  
West Dhanmondi, Dhaka

### No more corruption

The recent arrests of a good number of politicians and businessmen by the joint forces point to an intensification of the drive against corruption launched by the caretaker government. There is a broad sense of relief that such action has been taken. In the last five years and perhaps even more, the degree of venality that the political classes have indulged in has left the country in a shattered state. The situation should not have come to such a pass, given that we thought we had a working democracy defining life and its priorities for us. The record of the last five years has proved, though that even elected governments can turn autocratic and worse, corrupt.

It is now corruption that the country would like to see handled firmly. Those who have been taken into custody, we trust, will be given a fair hearing. That is the demand of justice. However, the most important point here is that a speedy process of filing of charges and consequent trial should be initiated, and all through a transparent system, in order to convince the nation that those who have indulged in corruption will not in future be in a position to play havoc with the country.

It will be our expectation that the caretaker government will go after not only corrupt politicians and businessmen but will also net all

those government employees who have vitiated the administration through partisan activities. We understand that the authorities plan action against the bureaucrats who recently were caught meeting secretly. Such action will send out the necessary message that in the times ahead no one, no matter how highly he or she may be placed, can go beyond the law. Corruption and criminality cannot be encouraged any more.

While measures must be taken to tackle corruption, care must be there to ensure that the corrupt are not able to come out free through the legal loopholes. At the same time, it is hugely important that due process of law be applied in handling those who may be taken into custody. This will entail not only a regard for the process but will also allow justice to be done without any questions being raised by any quarters. There is one other point the government ought to bear in mind, which is that arrests need to be made on the basis of specific allegations. And once that is done, specific charges against the detained individuals must be filed before the cases are taken up in court. Let there be no mistake. Even as we expect the caretaker administration to prepare the country for the next general election, we believe it must carry on with the job of cleansing the political process through to the end. We would like to think that under the present dispensation, the needed

reforms of politics and society will be done.

**No more corruption!**  
**Sharmin Rashid Nice**  
Department of English  
Lalmatia Girls College, Dhaka

### Undue fare increase

The government has raised the oil prices to adjust the local prices of oil with the international prices. It is always seen that the prices of essentials along with the fares of bus and truck are increased by certain undue profit-seeking groups at a much higher rate than the rate of oil price increase. Even the fares of the CNG-driven buses were nearly doubled during the last price hike without any valid grounds. Surprisingly, the then minister for communications, Mr. Nazmul Huda, supported the increase of fare of the CNG-driven bus in the city which is now the main mode of transport of middle and lower income groups. It was reported that the then minister and his close aides used to run the CNG-driven buses in the city, many of which operated without proper papers (now seen kept in a field beside Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway).

We want precautionary measures from the present government against the move of that quarter to increase CNG-run bus fares following the oil price hike. We also seek government intervention for reducing the present extravagant fare of the CNG-run buses in Dhaka city and other parts of the country to help the middle and lower income groups.

**Toufiq-E-Elahi Choudhury**  
New Eskaton, Dhaka

### Diplomats' role

May I express my strong objection to Dr. Zaman's comments on foreign diplomats. I believe they performed admirably to help us overcome a national crisis. We were in a similar crisis in the past when diplomats from friendly nations did come forward to resolve differences. In my view the conspiracy theory is applicable to our own leadership which exploits the poor and innocent people under false promises.

Had it not been for the disqualification of one candidate, the general election might have been held on 22 Jan. '07. Can you imagine the consequences? Another five years with the same kind of exploiters and self-seekers in power! Why not poke your nose more into their affairs and ask them for protocol when they shamelessly rob the poor nation? There is the conspiracy, Dr. Zaman.

**Dr. M. Motahar**  
Uttara, Dhaka

### PSC and corruption

The Bangladesh Public Service Commission (PSC) is the only constitutionally guided apex body for selection of suitable candidates for recruitment in civil service of the country. The civil service is the lifeblood of the government

machinery. But the PSC has totally failed to uphold its dignity in discharging its duty reflecting the nation's needs. Successive governments tried to manipulate the institution nakedly over all sorts of norms, ethics and values to control the civil service. The image of this institution has been drastically damaged over the last five years when leakage of questions papers, political influence, marks tempering, manipulations in viva voce, bribery etc were common phenomena. It has not only given birth to a demoralised section of officials in the civil service but also damaged the spirit of the nation. It is said that corruption is eating up the vitals of the nation.

The PSC is facilitating the corruption and helping degradation of the quality of civil service tactfully and diplomatically. It is heartening to know that the present caretaker government is taking drastic steps to get rid of corruption. But the PSC has remained untouched so far. Questions have been raised as to how the PSC can still move to complete the selection process of the controversial 27th BCS when a massive anti-corruption drive is going on and substantial allegations have been brought against it? A section of the provisionally selected candidates of the 27th BCS are trying to convince the concerned authorities through media arguing that if the same is cancelled the meritorious/genuine candidates will be deprived and it will be an injustice to them. They also argue that they have been preparing for the last two years for getting selected through a long process. But there is another side of the coin. Many meritorious and genuine candidates have also been deprived and dropped to accommodate the corrupt ones. Can the CTG feel the pulse of those candidates? Many of them will not get the opportunity to sit for the exams again due to the age bar. So, the nation feels and expects that the present CTG will take their decision prudently to do justice to all the stakeholders and give exemplary punishment to the culprits after a rigorous scrutiny of the 27th BCS.

**A deprived candidate**  
**East Razabazar**  
Dhaka

### Bangladesh Medical College

The recent inspection of the newly built college building of Bangladesh Medical College on its Dhanmondi campus by Rajuk reportedly revealed that it was built in total defiance of the building codes. The authorities had resorted to illegal construction of a most unsafe flimsy building for the students.

Such irregularities must not be overlooked.  
**Acitizen**  
**Gulshan, Dhaka**

### Storing potato

It is good that the government is finally defining 'hoarding'. This will

be an indication to the businessmen what they should and should not do.

We have started storing potato in cold storages for off season table potato and next years 'seed'. Table potato will be in market in June to October and cultivators will take delivery of seed potato from October to December. This is a normal practice in any cold storage.

I would, therefore, urge upon the commerce ministry to issue directions to all concerned so that we can store potato in cold storages without any misunderstanding.

**A. Rob Chowdhury**  
Past Chairman  
Bangladesh Cold Storage Association

### Raising retirement age

The genuineness and compulsion for raising the retiring age of government servants from the present 57 to 60 years is long overdue and can hardly be overemphasized. There is a general national consensus on the issue and both the Awami League and the BNP had included this in their election manifesto. But neither party after coming to power lived up to their commitment, apparently for political consideration. The present caretaker government has been working for reforms, keeping national interest above everything else. It will be in the fitness of things if the government takes up the issue with due urgency and promulgate an ordinance to this effect without delay.

**Nasim Chowdhury**  
Panthopath, Dhaka

### Deep seaport

We are amazed to note that a group of high level professionals in Dhaka demanded establishment of a deep seaport in the shallow sea of Chittagong. They have ignored the fact that there is no deep sea suitable for establishing a port near Chittagong.

We need to remind them that they need deep sea for establishing a deep seaport. This is available in the sea near Cox's Bazar.

**Dr. M. J. Alam**  
University of Science & Technology  
Chittagong (USTC)  
Foy's Lake, Chittagong

### Tax on consultancy

Expertise and competency are increasing in consultancy jobs/assignments through open competition. These are in some cases fulltime jobs and stand as a single source of our income. We do not maintain any profitable office nor simultaneously provide inputs for other assignments. We are also assisting in capacity building of our counterparts in the government while at work. Being involved in the contractual consultancy jobs we provide our best services with commitment and creativity having excellent skills and competency in the areas of our expertise.

Despite these facts, we are treated as firms and become victim of heavy taxes including Vat on our hard earned remuneration. According to the existing financial bill we used to pay 10% income tax and 4.5% Vat every month on our monthly payments. I strongly protest imposition of Vat on an individual who doesn't run a profitable office. It is injustice to a national expert and deprives him/her from a good amount of hard earned money. On the other hand, a straight forward charging of 10% income tax on the monthly payment is unjustified as well. As bona fide tax payers, maintaining tax files with TIN, we are heavily charged for paying income tax on the whole amount of yearly income, since no deduction is allowed from house rent, medical/conveyance allowance as per existing income tax assessment procedures. This is a double standard in a country like Bangladesh. Under no circumstances the fees of individual consultants should come under Vat, and a uniform procedure of yearly income tax assessment should prevail as in the case of other categories of salaried persons.

I would therefore like to appeal to the caretaker government, particularly to the Honourable Adviser in charge of the Ministry of Finance to review the present IT and Vat rules applied to the monthly fees/remuneration of an individual consultant. Kindly withdraw the existing Vat imposed on the individual consultancy fees and reduce IT to 5%, instead of the present rate of 10%.

**Tariq Abdullah**  
Central Road, Dhaka

### Govt servants getting dual citizenship

Nowadays migration is a big issue. Not only people work abroad as temporary workers but there are also many Bangladeshis going abroad as immigrants. Canada, Australia, US, UK and some Scandinavian countries are still offering migration and whoever wants and possesses required qualifications could be an immigrant. As an immigrant when I came to Canada three years ago I quit my great job and all of my

## Ban on campus politics

It is a very good initiative by the interim government that campus politics in the public institutions is being banned permanently. We appreciate this endeavour much, as this is one of the major obstacles to reaching the ultimate goals of the educational institutions. Though student politics has a glorious past, but in the present context it is doing nothing but harm to the institutions. Some people may want to know how future leaders will be groomed. Actually this is baseless rhetoric. The best examples are the caretaker government advisers as they are not the product of student politics and are now doing far better than the politicians. Again, all over the world students and teachers are not tagged with political parties. So why should it be so in Bangladesh?

We welcome this initiative taken by the UGC (directed by the Ministry of Education). Hopefully, the public universities will get back the congenial atmosphere for teaching and research.

friends and relatives had done so. But I can see some people who are of course government employees, especially engineers from LGED, FD, Roads & Highways and some other government professionals who have stable illegal income rather than salary, are migrating keeping their government jobs. They just come abroad taking three to six months' leave, stay and keep their families here, transfer all hard cash through illegal sources and go back to Bangladesh. Then this process continues until they get citizenship.

My question is how the government allows 'government employees' to migrate to another country keeping the government job and benefits? How are these government employees taking three/six months' leave each year and going abroad? How can they buy very expensive houses abroad? How can they bring their belongings renting ship containers? I believe the present caretaker government should look into the matter and make a list of the government employees who are dual citizens or trying to be so.

**Nasim Ahmed**  
New York  
US

### Bring in honest people

Thanks to the Internet, we can closely follow the ongoing activities in Bangladesh. We, Bangladeshis living abroad, greatly appreciate the present government's steps to curb corruption and punish those responsible for disgracing the country year after year, with the TI rating. We believe that the present



However, those who speak in different seminars in favour of campus politics are somehow benefited by the politics in the universities. They are far away from proper teaching and research and are involved in partisan politics and divided

on many constructive issues in the academic arena. They include teachers of the universities.

**Mohammad Lutfur Rahman**  
PG Student  
The University of Nottingham  
UK

### AL's defeat in 2002

It is true that the main reason behind Awami League's election defeat in 2002 was corruption and terrorism by its MPs like Hazari of Feni, Hasnat Abdullah of Barisal, Shameem Osman of Narayanganj, although they blame election engineering for their defeat. General people of Bangladesh understand that very well.

This time in 2007 they nominated the same villains for the election that they finally boycotted. We, the general people, will suffer a lot if this continues. We can't support the AL or the BNP.

**Anonymous**  
On e-mail

### Why Jaywalking?

There is no overbridge in between Khilkhet and Kakoli overbridge. Ultimately, pedestrians are bound to jaywalk while crossing the road and it results in many mishaps. Nowadays some speed-breakers are appearing on this road but are they enough to prevent accidents? Yes, they might reduce the number of accidents but can't guarantee that no mishap will take place. Many accidents have taken place so far and many people have lost their lives on this road.

Pedestrians have to wait for a long time to cross the road, so it's time consuming too. The authorities concerned should look into the matter and take such steps as will enable people to cross the road safely.

**H. M. Abu Hasnat (Razib)**  
Khilkhet, Dhaka

### Don't worry, foreigners

Foreigners, do not worry yourselves to death that we are without an elected government. We are quite satisfied with the caretaker government and their efforts to eradicate widespread corruption and crime. Even though the 7:00pm shutdown is rather tough getting used to at first. And even if we do elect a government, we do not want to see any members of the BNP, the AL or Ershad's party, etc, in it. We want these people (in the caretaker government) in elected government also, even if they stand independently.

Maybe, they ought to form a new party: Peoples' Caretakers!  
**Sumaiyah Afrin**  
Kuwait

## Misery of landless people

In the big cities like Dhaka and Chittagong, we see many people living on the sides of railway tracks or streets just covering their heads with torn polythene. We are accustomed to seeing this picture and sometimes we are very much annoyed with them for disturbing the beauty of the city but we never think how miserable a life they are leading. Most of these floating people are landless and they are victims

of river erosion. They are coming to the big cities for employment so that they can manage at least two meals a day. Though it may not be easy for them, they are trying hard to get it. If they cannot manage any job, then nothing but begging will be their ultimate fate. Moreover, acute poverty forces them to commit crimes.

Now the question is how long will we overlook this problem? As a developing country,

we have to introduce many projects where employment is available.

We know that river erosion is a big problem which increases the number of landless people. It has to be managed efficiently. The government should look into the matter on a priority basis.

**Mohammad Anisur Rahman**  
Pahartali, Chittagong

## Sheikh Hasina



I am extremely surprised to read in your newspaper that Sheikh Hasina has been charge-sheeted in a murder case, even though no complaint was lodged against her by the Jamaat.

History is repeating itself, and no lesson has been learnt. Field Marshal Ayub Khan wanted to speak in the "Language of weapons" when the 6-point programme was unveiled by Hasina's father, which turned into his admis-

sion of failing to administer Pakistan, in his speech on 24 March, 1969 he said, "I cannot preside over the destruction of my country."

Ayub wanted to remove Mujib and the AL from the political spectrum of Pakistan, he did rather trigger the dismemberment of his country. Mujib became Bangabandhu and the father of our nation.

**M. Hussain**

Canada