

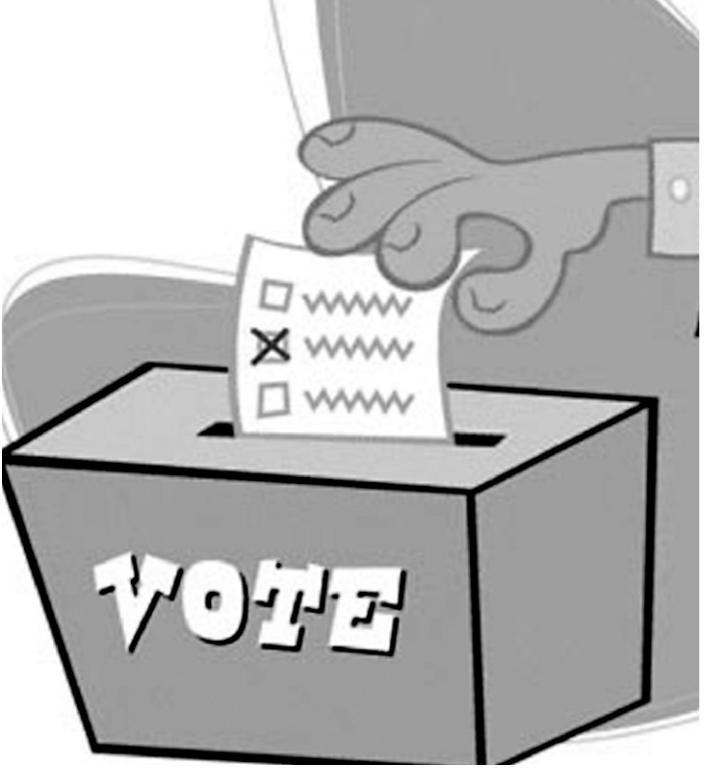


Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

The 'no vote'

The Election Commission deserves appreciation for its significant proposal for introducing a system for casting "no vote" in parliamentary elections to express voters' lack of confidence in the candidates in a constituency. But if the people

know that it will not affect the election results, then they will probably not turn up in polling stations to cast vote. In principle the "no vote" should have the same weight & value as that of "yes vote". The Election Commission should reconsider



Loss of valuable lives

The incident that took place in Chittagong is tragic, to say the least. Every year during the rainy season we hear news of loss of valuable lives in Chittagong in mudslides.

The authorities concerned should address the issue in right earnest and prevent loss of lives under such unfortunate circumstances.

Solaiman Palash
East Jurain, Dhaka

New budget

Tk. 300 hundred per month is a very small amount. Nevertheless, I want

to applaud the decision taken by the government to earmark some money for a section of people who really turn helpless during this particular period. In a poor country like Bangladesh the pregnancy period is really a tough time. Though the government and non-government organisations are working to remove gender disparity, the situation is still very bad. I am afraid if the government distributes the money among the pregnant women, who are unable to take any decision about their own lives, they may not be able to utilise the money. Rather, the male guardians will be benefited by it. In

my view, they should be given other essentials that they can consume directly. As malnutrition is the main problem during pregnancy, the government can arrange to supply a balanced diet for some days, if not regularly.

Today (11/06/07), I read in 'The Daily Star' that each farmer will get Tk 100 as diesel subsidy and they will also be supplied with fertilisers in subsidised rate. Very good initiative but I have a question regarding the distribution process. The disbursement will be carried out by block supervisors. I am sure most farmers don't know about block supervisors.

The other proposal that every registered political party must have specific provision in its constitution for including at least 33 percent women as office bearers of its central and other committees is also not compatible with democratic norms. All political parties should practise democracy in electing their office bearers. We are all advocating equal rights for men & women. Women should come forward by virtue of their talent & capability, and not by taking advantage of some quota system.

The provision for imposing a ban on political parties for having front organisations comprising students, teachers & workers, will, of course, be endorsed by the majority of common people. We want to see politics-free educational institutions and factories & establishments.

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna

So, the authorities concerned should look into the matter and make sure that the farmers are really benefited by the government's move.

Md. Asaduzzaman
Department of Sociology
University of Dhaka

Food and drug safety

My 4-year old daughter likes the advertisement of Danish juice very much on TV channels. One day she asked me why I don't buy Danish juice for her. I said that it was not available here, she could have it when she is in Bangladesh. So, one of her agendas on our last visit to Bangladesh was to drink a lot of Danish juice every day.

Millions of little daughters and sons love such drinks. We, parents, were not aware until recently that even well-known companies would use expired sugar and milk in the foods and drinks, which are especially produced for children.

I am not a lawyer, nor have I any idea about laws on adulteration of baby foods. To me, this is a serious crime. The people behind such crime don't have the basic human traits and they can kill people for money!

In my opinion, the companies which are involved in producing adulterated foods and drugs must be banned forever.

The non-political caretaker government can easily enact and enforce such laws.

Faruk Ahmed
On e-mail

Tushar Imran

I do not understand how the selectors failed to include Tushar Imran! I think this has been a very harsh decision.

Munir
Michigan, US

Fundraising

Reports in newspapers on June 5, 2007 said that both the big political parties collect money for their parties in various unlawful ways. This money is mainly spent for election. On December 07, 2006 Bangladesh Economic Society's General Secretary Dr. Abul Barakat revealed that Tk 20 thousand crore would be spent in the January 22, 2007 general election in Bangladesh. In this regard I have a

small analysis of a relevant report published in newspapers on October 16, 2006. The news said, "More than 3,500 Iowa Democrats paid \$100 each to attend the fund-raising banquet that kicked off with Clinton's speech. About 50 people paid \$10,000 per couple to attend a private reception with Clinton beforehand." It was the situation in a single state of the US on the fund raising inauguration day.

We are now a Nobel Prize winning nation. Can't we compare political fund raising in the US with that of Bangladesh? I think, yes, because Dr. Yunus' micro-credit model has been successfully used in the US for the last two decades (and later in many other countries).

Even before the partition of the sub-continent, the then major political party of the soil, Muslim League, raised its funds substantially by taking 'two annas' from its tens of thousands of workers in 1946, prior to the election (Abul Hashim, My Life and Pre-Partition Politics of Undivided Bengal, Page 52, Bengali version).

After the liberation of Bangladesh, all ruling parties have complained that opposition parties have been responsible for huge losses of properties in the country. These losses must be quantified for each regime. The same thing has to be done for quantifying how much public money has unlawfully gone into the pockets of ruling party leaders, including ministers and MPs.

Saif Tinku
On e-mail

Khaleda Zia and development

Now we know Khaleda Zia really brought a tidal surge of development in the country during her regime, which washed us away in the ocean of unlimited corruption by her family and party men.

The Almighty has saved us, at least for the time being, from further surge of her tidal bore of development.

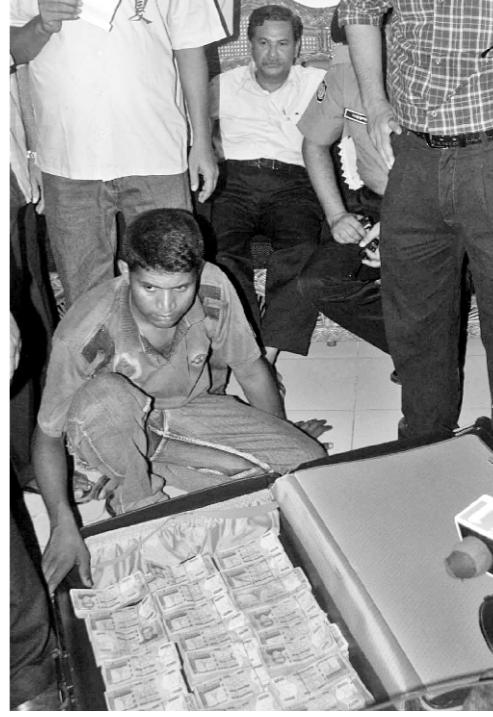
Shafiqul Islam
On e-mail

Transition

I would like to express my feelings on our historical transition. There are four things that I think we must follow in our national life:

a) We must put education ahead of everything.

Corruption at its worst



It is my opinion that government officials who are in positions where they are supposed to ensure the welfare of the nation should be held accountable for corruption on more stringent standards than the average corrupt civilian.

The recent news of the vilest form of corruption by Babar and Osman Gani has shaken my own understanding of corruption. They have revealed how low a person can stoop. Such crimes by the home minister and the Chief Forest Conservator must be severely dealt with.

I also realise that these individuals did not act alone. They acted in complicity with the police and other influential quarters. If the present caretaker government leaves one legacy, it must be a vastly strengthened and empowered police that will be trained to bring security and the rule of law to all citizens.

N. Rahim
On e-mail

have to be sustainable and reflective of the people's aspirations. The national leadership should have a clear vision of the future of Bangladesh.

Md. Umran Bin Kamran
Student of class Eleven
Scholastica School

Doctors

I really appreciate the ongoing activities of the joint forces. The economy of the country was crippled during the rule of the democratic government—they never think about the welfare of the poor people.

Now, I would expect a massive crackdown on doctors. Most of them are not rendering the service they ought to.

N Islam
Chittagong

- b) Punish the criminals.
- c) Applaud and reward the good deeds.
- d) Hate dishonesty.

Liaquat
Uttara, Dhaka

Shocking indeed!

I became dumbfounded while watching the report in the middle of news presentation in a private channel on the plight of a mother whose son is more than a billionaire.

Many instances analogous to this one could be cited, but it was indeed shocking to learn about such a son.

Mohammad Shafiqul Islam
Lecturer, Department of English
Metropolitan University, Sylhet

A rare opportunity

Living under an emergency is certainly not a pleasant thing. But unusual circumstances have to be accepted when the future of the country totally depends on them.

Thus the majority of Bangladeshis welcomed the declaration of the state of emergency on January 11.

The pre-emergency period had pushed Bangladesh's democracy to the brink of collapse. The streets and the cars were burning while the economy came to a standstill. The institutions of democracy had been weakened to an unimaginable extent, while corruption plagued the political elite.

But with much relief came the emergency and the present situation gives us the rare opportunity of a historical transition. Perhaps now there is the greatest unity among countrymen since independence. The challenge to Bangladesh's democracy is corruption. It defies almost every principle which defines democracy.

The caretaker government has taken a tough stand against corruption. It is working to hold a free and fair election by carrying out the necessary reforms to the political and electoral systems.

Although there are some dilemmas such as rising prices of essentials and the power crisis, we have to remain united and make this transition successful. Democracy will

