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as long as the system works for him? I am sure we can expect this much consistency from our reporters and editors. As for me, I want to ask him whether human rights organisations like Drishtipat will still be called anti-Bangladesh for speaking out on rights issues, or whether human rights activists and journalists like Priscilla Raj and Saleem Samad will again be charged with treason for helping with reports on religious extremism.

I would like to ask Sheikh Hasina whether journalists like Tipu Sultan will be called "information terrorists" again. If we can get a commitment from them now that such things will never happen again and this commitment is kept after they come to power, only then something positive will come out of this noise. We need to now look beyond the election of 2008.

Labelling and creating controversy is easy. But what is difficult is to step back and take a longer term view of issues. Just because I am criticising some aspects of the government now does not mean that I am an admirer of what happened in the past regimes. Similarly, just because I admire some of the changes in the administration post-1/11 does not mean that I am a propagandist for the military-backed government.

Election as early as possible is a must, but let's face it -- these systemic issues will not go away as soon as an elected government comes to power. As we are heading towards election, not only we need to be vigilant about a free, fair, and meaningful election, we also need to start asking tough questions to the political parties to hear about their agenda and commitment on fixing the system when they come to power after the election.

Too often we are happy to bury important conversations for short term relief. I hope we don't make the same mistake now. I can only pray and hope that some people who are in a position to have an honest debate are not disingenuous in their arguments and keep this big picture in mind.

And, of course, lastly, please don't label me anyone's *dalal*. As a friend once wrote before we are all only *dalals* of Bangladesh.

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