beneficiaries enforced their own partisan version of reality.

The rapidly changing demographic balance, combined with a shifting power balance from the rapidly growing media, is bound to change the chemistry of political negotiations. But why?

The Chemistry of Change

Our nation is blessed with two chemical properties -- homogeneity and volatility.

The beauty of homogeneity is that you cannot segregate your people for too long, unlike in Africa or the Middle East with rigid tribal identities.

The beauty of volatility is that you cannot create blind political loyalties for long. All partisan political identities in Bangladesh can easily fade like lines in the sand, especially for generations without much political baggage and with clean slates.

Both are bad news for the old business model of politics. Media and technology are bound to trigger Schumpeterian creative destruction process in our politics. Ultimately, politicians, out of self-interest, will have to move toward the new business model; serving the common good of the majority. And the new business model may attract new entrepreneurs -- the Obamas.

Let's aggregate the above discussion:

- The demographic tectonic shift underway is bound to transform our politics.
- This shift is inevitable due to rising flow of information through the media and mobile phones.
- The inevitability is ensured by the chemistry of our psyche, history and identity.

Inevitability

My prediction is that the demographic tsunami of Generation B is bound to create large political waves in Bangladesh in the next five to ten years. With 75 per cent of the population, they will be by far the strongest political force since independence.

Politics, politicians, and institutions are often local and backward-looking, influenced by their own background and training. That's why Generation B's needs and views will need their own genre of politicians -- the Obamas, who will be able to inspire and address their issues.

The demand for a new generation of leaders is high. A hundred million people is a large enough pool for the future supply of Obamas. We just need a system that can promote new leaders by creating political space for them. One possible solution is to nominate new entrants through the primary system.

Americans would not have learnt about Barack Obama if they did not have a primary system. Without the primary system, Hillary Clinton and her convenient last name would be the uncontested democratic nominee. The very system of primary elections allowed Obama the mobility to move from the bottom of the food chain to the front-runner.

I realise this analogy has its limitations and applicability. But my point is simple -- if we allow intra-party competition, new leaders will emerge. We have a vibrant media and an increasingly connected and politically aware people who are waiting to be inspired for a hopeful tomorrow and who wants a bigger menu of leaders.



AMIRUL RAJIV

Generation B is coming to the forefront of politics with the inevitability of an avalanche. The very demand from them will encourage the supply of our future Obamas, most likely from Generation B, as long as we can ensure sufficient political competition and transparency.

Let's all think and debate how.

Generation Bangladesh, are you listening?

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