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## Election 2008

As far as my memory goes, I was born in Bangladesh which is in South East Asia. What I understand listening to the elders and reading books is that this part of the world was civilized much before Europe and America.

However, looking at our post independence national politics for the last 37 years, like many others, I am a bit confused whether the books printed regarding the past and culture of this region are correct and authentic. I will not elaborate as everyone in Bangladesh is aware of the past & present political situation of the country. The dark cloud which gathered on the horizon of the country 22 months back is still hanging out and may form into a serious storm any time, if we don't get on our feet and tighten our belts now.

It was the Awami League 22 months ago which did not want to participate in the elections, and now it is the then ruling BNP that wants to boycott the election on similar excuses. The only difference now is that there is no hartal and burning of buses full of passengers (thanks to the emergency). However, all the other symptoms are somewhat similar.

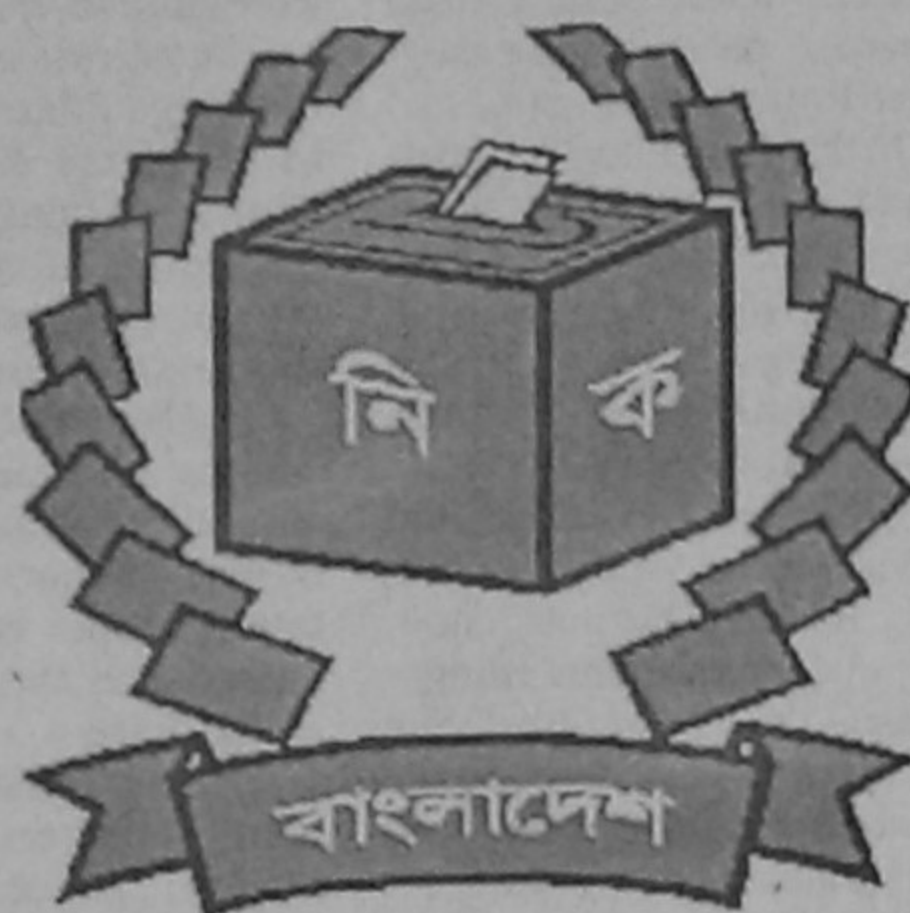
Though the elections are knocking at the door but we have not yet heard the agenda of the political parties who are taking part in the general elections, we want to know what they would like to offer the citizens when they assume power and what are the master plan they would like to implement.

We don't want a five-year plan like the past anymore, as we have seen all the five-year plans have failed and instead of bringing peace, development and prosperity they have brought conflict, unrest and poverty. The lot of the poor has not changed and they became poorer as we can see all over Bangladesh.

The business leaders of the country, like in the past, have made special requests for an accord through pre-election talks to formulate laws banning general strikes, barring children and minors from strikes and picketing. I don't know if at all the political parties which will not be in power would comply. Also will the ruling party be fair and brave enough to lift the Special Powers

Act?

We hope we do have the general election on time and we have a parliament which plays an active role in the country's development as it does in other countries where they have democracy. We want a safe heaven for our next generations as ours has been destroyed already due to virulent politics and politicians. I thank the Canadian government and the Bangladesh Election Commission for introducing the much wanted transparent ballot box and especially thank the Election Commission for introduc-



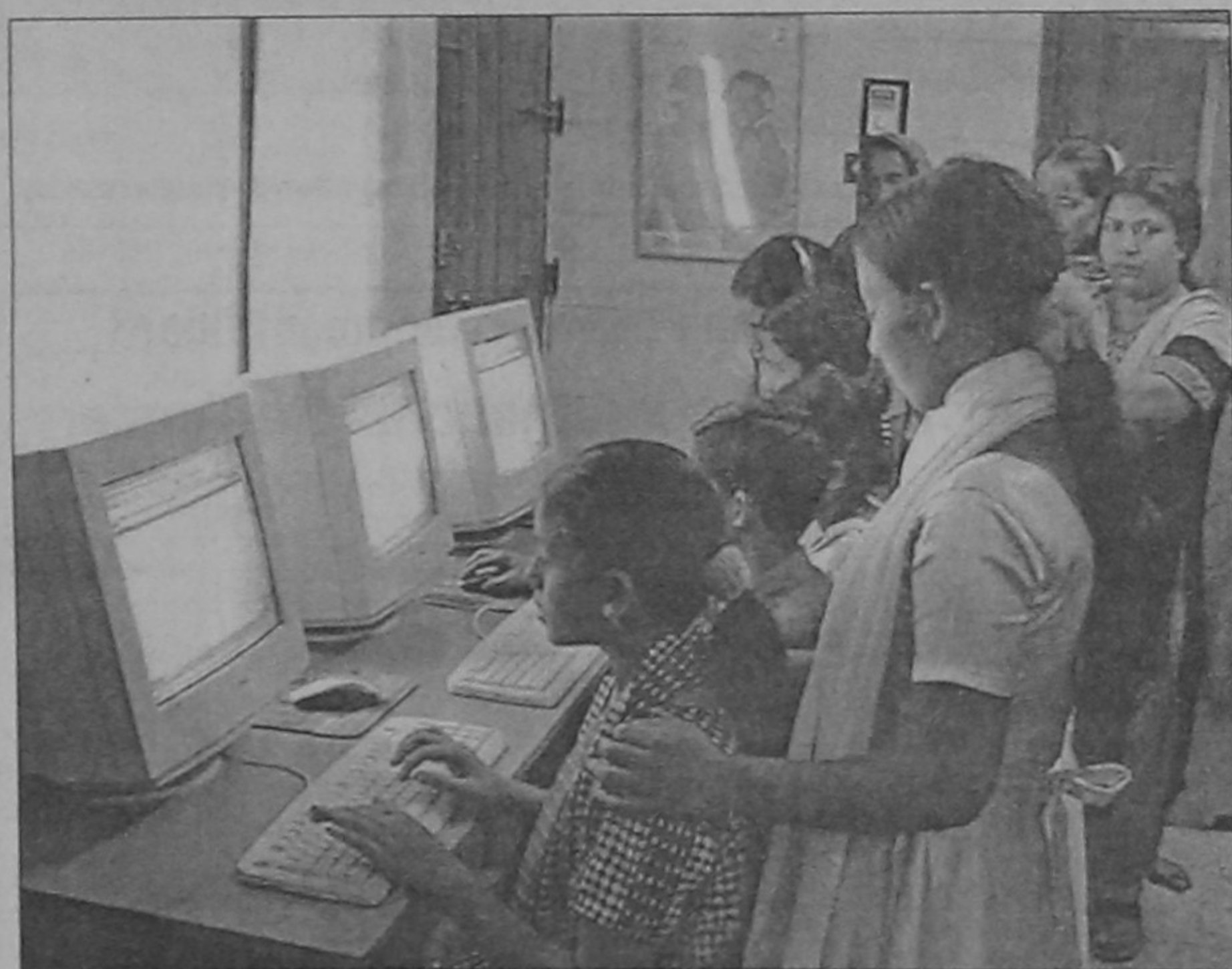
ing the "NO" option in the ballot paper.

We all hope that the elections will take place on time and if a major political party does not want to participate, let them watch as we want the elections and we want the end of the caretaker government as soon as possible as they failed to take care of the people and the country.

I am no expert on politics, nor am I a politician, but as a civilian I don't know what will be the future of the country if there is no election at all and if there is an election what will the forthcoming parliament offer to the millions of people in Bangladesh? As said before, I don't know what the 18 December election will offer to the country but one thing I know for sure is that we will have only 14-15 working days in December, as along with the holding of the general election and upazila election, Eid-ul-Azha and Christmas will be celebrated during the month.

Sohel Ahmed, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

## IT at SSC level?



We heard that IT study would be made compulsory at the SSC level. Obviously, it is very good news. But the reality is different. Most of the rural secondary schools have no electricity. I visited some rural schools recently. I knew that a school in rural areas in Rangpur got three computers, printers, computer tables and accessories and even a teacher trained on computer under

this project from NOTRAMS some years ago. But I found nothing except three computer tables and the school has no electricity till now!

So, I would like to draw the attention of the people concerned regarding IT being made compulsory at the SSC level.

Mawduda Hasnin  
Rajshahi

### Buying gas, a tricky affair

When our cars were run with octane, we could easily maintain log of how much oil was taken, how many kilometres the cars ran and keep our drivers' bad habits under control (to some extent). With our cars being converted into gas, this has become quite difficult. However, I would like to share my experience which I think may help some of the car owners.

When the gas rate doubled this year, my driver started asking for money to refuel the car every day - whereas with our regular work load we used to refuel it every alternate day. Each of the bills - 12 in two weeks - ranged from Tk 218 to Tk 300. I had no clue. To better understand the new situation, I decided to accompany the car during refuelling, at least for some days. With that, the need to take gas came down to the prior normal level and I learned the unique way of

cheating in gas stations.

1. We can ask the station boys to refuel worth a specific amount. We can tell that we want to take gas worth Tk 200, for example, and they can stop the nozzle exactly at that point.

2. You can ask for a fake bill from the cashier. A few weeks back, the driver standing just in front of me in the billing line asked for a bill of Tk 268, whereas his actual bill was Tk. 147. He paid Tk 10 to the cashier for his 'complicity'.

I am not interested in political discussion, I just want to request the car owners that whenever possible accompany your car when it goes for refuelling. Try to know the optimum capacity of your car's gas cylinder. The amount inserted in each fuelling may differ with the pressure of the gas and quality of the machines used in the station - but you will at least have an idea about the range. And always ask for the bill from your driver so that you can

track discrepancies.

Let's try for a better Bangladesh.  
Misha Mahjabeen  
One-mail

### Muslims in Philippines

A couple of days ago I was reading a news item in your newspaper that around ten Muslim rebels were killed in a six-hour fire fight in the southern Philippines. They were recognized as the members of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). However, there were no casualties on the government side, while 15 other MILF rebels were wounded.

What would have been the role of the UN if any rebel group wanted freedom from any Muslim majority country?

The President of the Philippines, Gloria Arroyo, should take necessary steps to unravel this conflict, so that people all over the region can lead a peaceful life.  
Golam Ashraf  
Gulshan  
Dhaka

### Melamine tests

The High Court's ruling on melamine tests as reported in a local English daily on November 11 is a step in the right direction. One however wonders if it really covers all the milk, imported or produced in Bangladesh based on imported milk powder.

In this connection, it may be noted that condensed milk in cans is produced in Bangladesh, based on imported milk powder. Some condensed milk is imported; as also a number of brands of liquid and evaporated milk. It is necessary that the melamine content of these imported milk products is known. For locally produced condensed milk, the melamine content for each batch of milk powder used should be printed on the can.

The same applies for all locally packed or imported liquid or evaporated, pasteurised or homogenised milk. The same information should be printed in all forms of milk powder; packed locally or directly imported for retail sale. All package must state the melamine content batch wise, and the batch number must be clearly marked.

This will cover practically all milk, produced locally or directly imported. Without this information, no product should be sold in the retail market. This will bring maximum transparency of milk quality, and help in protecting public health. It will ensure that the customers are getting safe milk; irrespective of their awareness about the harmful effect of melamine in milk.

S.A. Mansoor  
Dhaka

### Sick mentality?

I do not think any patient will be kept in hospital in any country of the world month after month, year after year. If there is no hope for the patients, they will be transferred to the rehabilitation centre. If the patient is terminally ill, the life support will be taken out with the permission of the patient's relatives. It is out of the question that a patient will occupy a bed or a cabin in the hospital forever under any circumstances. The politicians can fool the people of Bangladesh but not the rest of the world. How dumb our authorities are! I think Bangladesh should be given an international award for its dumbness.

The world is very small. There are many Bangladeshi physicians establishing themselves as successful and competent ones in the USA as well as elsewhere in the world. No one would agree with the need for medical board for any of the accused corrupt politicians here. The concept of forming a medical board is totally absent, at least in the USA. Why on earth the government allowed them to stay in the hospital for an indefinite period? Why did the government not even feel the need for consulting expatriate Bangladeshi physicians on this issue? It is not difficult to find them. If the local doctors are unable to treat simple diseases, why are they holding the positions as physicians? They should be ashamed of saying in front of the journalists that he/she needs to go to a foreign country for better treatment. It is a shame and the local doctors are not even bothered by their incompetence. This demonstrates how biased our professionals (doctors, engineers, teachers, lawyers) are. The nation expected a lot from the present caretaker government. The expatriate Bangladeshis welcomed the change of 1/11. The CTG has proved how futile our hopes were.

A nation cannot survive if there is no justice.  
Mamun Ahmed  
Las Vegas, NV, USA

### Good leader

A good leader must have a projected plan, programme and a decision-making body before taking up the highest seat of the republic with the latest equipment and the most competent persons.

A good leader is judged by the compatriots he/she keeps and the efficient use of the resources for all the citizens because the end justifies the means, which is recorded fairly and vividly in the country's history.

Golam Ashraf  
Gulshan  
Dhaka

### Agarwalla's comments

Instead of taking offence at Mr. Niraj Agarwalla's harsh comments on my letter, I feel I should enlighten him about the reasons behind my scepticism. It is very easy to be passionate and make sweeping remarks when you have no knowledge of how this group of people has suffered in the past and also how recent incidents have been surfacing on and off, giving fleeting glimpses of what easily could have been another Bradley Effect. Echoing my fear was my way of awakening all to what the consequences could be and how the world would look at it, if a man with Barack Obama's standing is not elected. This would have had a catastrophic effect on the world. We would have remained enslaved forever.

By electing Barack Obama the Americans have renewed the world's faith in them; let us rejoice in the glory, for we too are part of history in the making.

Nur Jahan  
Chittagong

### Commuters' sufferings

I am writing on a serious problem that the majority of Mohammadpur residents are facing. It is the problem of commuting. The restriction on non-motorised vehicles on some roads such as the Mirpur road and the Karwan Bazaar road has created a serious problem for the commuters.

There is no provision of rickshaws for travelling, neither any decent buses which can be available for public transport, except for the local buses which are in extremely poor condition. They lack coordination and safety standards.

Some spacious buses are available like 'Tarango' but their number is limited, considering the huge number of commuters.

None of the buses take a direct route from Mohammadpur to Karwan Bazaar which is very troublesome and inconvenient for office goers and students who have to go to Karwan Bazaar from Mohammadpur every day.

It is not possible for middle-class people like us to use CNG autorickshaws to commute from Mohammadpur to Karwan Bazaar.

I would, therefore, request the government to look into the matter.  
Naome Syed  
Tajmahal Road  
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

### Lift ban on ICL players

In the latest version of thrilling cricket, ICL 20-20 championship, 2008/09, Dhaka Warriors with all Bangladeshi players and at their first appearance secured the fifth position surpassing Delhi Giants, Ahmedabad Rockets, Chandigarh Lions and Mumbai Champs in the Standings Table.

Our national team players, whose average age is around 22, should receive tips and techniques as to how to win a game in unfavourable conditions. Bangladesh Cricket Board should start paying the way for passing the successful seniors' vast experience to the juniors for the better performance of our national cricket team.

In this context, BCB should reconsider lifting the ban on ICL players, after consulting the International Cricket Council.

Saif Tinku  
Baridhara, Dhaka

### Cox's Bazar

Cox's Bazaar has only one unique feature, and that is its length - more than 100km, and that's all. The tourists once going there will never think of going again. The beach has no security. After evening! God help you. No lights, no security personnel, no transport and what else do you expect? Can't the authorities make some safety arrangement for the people who go for swimming? It's not that difficult. Just put more people to take care of swimmers. The canyons in the shore are not too many. They can be covered by strong poles and even nets with large holes, which will not resist the water flow but stop the people from falling into the trap of those deep holes or canyons.

The transportation system in the town is horrible. The roads are narrow and full of

## Political turmoil

Hartal, procession and turbulence are very common things prior to election in our country. I have never seen any election without these 'essentials'. Lately, the apprehension of three political leaders has exhibited a sign of imminent political unrest. Besides, one of the major political parties has announced its seven point demand, signalling the impending political unrest. We understand that election under the state of emergency is unconstitutional and unlawful, but is creating anarchy and crippling the country by calling hartal and putting it into a deadlock lawful? Everybody wants a free and fair election but many of us don't want to make it happen under the state of emergency, why? We know that people do not enjoy fundamental rights, while living under emergency rules. Actually, what is our fundamental right - is it like acting as a suicidal bomber, slaying innocent people

and battling each other for grabbing power and freely getting involved in corruption to be rich overnight? Have we ever thought when does a country need to go under the state of emergency rules? In fact this govt. was necessary for this country to bring back the lost gloss of everything. Albeit the entire country has not yet been free of venality, but its authority has been striving their level best to eliminate the venal groups for the sake of prosperity. Already crores of taka illegally gotten by our so-called politicians has been refunded to the govt. exchequer for future development of this crippled country. Not only they (politicians) have proved that they will be on the rampage, making a chaotic situation, but also they will be indulging in corruption as soon as the emergency goes.

Hasnat  
One-mail



MUNEM WASIF / DRINKNEWS

rickshaws. You just can't move. Of course, bar is banned all over the country, but the rules can be relaxed for the foreigners in some places like Chittagong, Cox's Bazaar, Kaptai, Rangamati, Bandarban, Khagrachhari, Sylhet etc. The Maldives' major source of income is tourism. Why can't we follow them?

Md. Shafiqul Islam Bhuiyan  
Mirpur, Dhaka

### Advertisement ethics

The UK government has recently amended its employment laws to restrain any job vacancy advertisement which restricts applicants within an age bracket. It is inhuman and a national financial loss to restrict a massive experienced wise workforce from offering the nation its expertise by restricting age-limits of the applicants.

Our government service-holders retire at an even earlier age which is usually not a crabbled age for many. I draw the attention of our future lawmakers to look into this issue, if they have time after wasting innumerable sessions and public money in many worthless political history glorifications. I also think it is insulting to advertise property rentals offering priorities to foreigners. Skin fairing lotions should also be advertised in a non-insulting manner for the genetically dark skinned mass. In a recent complaint to the Advertisement Monitoring Authorities in the UK, I have been successful in stopping

televising of a skin fairing lotion in a tribunal decision.  
Mufassil Islam  
Human Rights Advocate  
UK

### Back to 1971

Everyone knows that the independence of Bangladesh in 1971 gained momentum due to the political party 'Awami League'. And its slogan 'Joy Bangla' worked as a strengthening factor in the battle for our political freedom.

Rubab Abdullah  
Dhaka Cantonment  
Dhaka

### CA's bold decision

The Chief Adviser has finally spoken and vowed to hold the national election as per schedule he promised to the nation time and again. The nation has felt a sigh of relief hearing this news. This is what the people of all walks of life were waiting for. I believe the people of Bangladesh will remember the CTG if this happens and an elected government is in place at the dawn of 2009. Bangladesh is not anybody's personal property and an individual however powerful he/she may be cannot manipulate on his or her sweet will and dictate things as he/she wishes. If the people of Bangladesh have learnt something from 1/11, they should back the present CTG to bring change in the age-old confrontational politics based on lies, fake hopes and unhealthy rivalry.

We feel really disturbed to listen to the opinions of some political analysts, including

some foreign mission chiefs that if such and such party do not participate in the election, no election will be a credible one. I differ with their opinion because what we have seen in the past, what we have experienced in the past, is that our leaders did politics for their own personal gains only.

Their method of climbing to power and stay there was by discrediting the opposition, holding out false hopes, using muscle powers and money against their rivals etc. Time has come to bring change in the methods. And people can achieve it by helping the present government.

A leader of one of the major political parties is making demand after demand to suit their own needs. It is a never ending game plan of that party and will not stop till the situation is in their favour. I appreciate the CA who has taken the bold step to hold the election on time.  
Shafiqul Islam  
NY

### Say 'no' to drugs

Nowadays young generations of the country, boys and girls, are going for drug abuse. Furthermore, because of the inactivity of law enforcement agencies, the business of drugs is going on freely. Although the media is trying its best to raise social awareness among the general public, it is not enough to deal with the menace in the long run.

More effective steps are needed to contain drug abuse.

Rakin  
BBA, SUST  
Sylhet

## Garments industry's prospects

A great possibility has emerged in exporting garments products of our country. Many world famous retailers in this sector are eager to buy such products from our country.

In the past, they used to buy these products mostly from China & other countries. The owners of garments industries of our country should be alert enough, so that these possibilities

increase day by day and our garments industry can prosper further.

Side by side, the government should also take necessary steps in this regard.

Swarup Saha  
Department of Business Administration  
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology  
Sylhet



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