Editor's Note

AT long last, the parliamentary elections that we have waited patiently for these past two years, appear to be in sight. If all goes well then Bangladesh will go the polls exactly three weeks from today and few would suggest that the elections have come a moment too soon.

What the past two years have taught us, more than anything else, is the limits and constraints of an unelected government. By any measure, the two years that we have gone with a caretaker government in pace is the absolute outside limit that we can afford to be governed without an elected and accountable parliament, and, indeed, the entire nation hopes that such a long interregnum of non-democratic rule is never again repeated.

The challenges facing the new government and an appraisal of the successes and failures of the caretaker government are exercises that can wait until the coming month. Right now, the only important consideration is the upcoming elections, who they will bring to power, and what this will mean for the country.

To this end, this issue of Forum is a pre-election special that focuses on the upcoming polls, examining the electoral landscape from every possible angle. Most crucially, we have invited a new generation of young political leaders to make the case for their parties here in the pages of Forum, so that our readers can hear first-hand what each party or alliance stands for and what can be expected from them if they are part of the next government.

Everything is in place for the elections. The voter roll is the most comprehensive and error-free we have ever had. All the parties are, at long last, on board, and there is no reason to believe that the elections will be anything other than free and fair. We fully anticipate that the emergency will be lifted in the coming week and that campaigning can get underway in right earnest.

The elections are what the country has been waiting for these past two years. It is our fervent wish and belief that nothing happen in the next three weeks to derail the elections or to bring them into controversy, and that all the political parties enter into the campaign season with vigour and enthusiasm, and are rewarded at the polls with votes from those they represent.

We hope that this issue of Forum clarifies whatever issues exist in the minds of our readers about where the political parties and alliances stand and help to contribute to an informed and fully participatory election.

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