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Post-election scenario

Come 2009, the eagerly awaited election will only result in the same old tarnished politics in the same old parties; still tied to the tail of their founders' names, and practicing autocracy in the garb of democracy, once again ruling the roost! Will there be any change in their attitudes, mind-set and smelly practices? I wonder! It will be only more of the same; and as we say "Old wine in old bottles" with nothing new to write home about.

All along they believed and practiced the principles of, first "I and mine" second comes, "My extended family and chamechas". Number three will be "ours and the party's". Matters of public interest will be the last item in the list, if there is any time and energy left over after catering to the needs of the first three priorities mentioned.

Will this style change at all overnight? I guess not. Election victory will be like winning a war; with winners taking all. There will be no friendly hand extended to the losers. Our immature, or call it naïve, politicians believe in "winners take all" and "devil takes the hindmost".

The devil here is the "opposition", whose patriotism even will be questioned; to say the least. Shortly after our jails will find new tenants, should the "unpatriotic" opposition try to express themselves vocally! Theirs will not to question why; but only cry and go along with what is entrenched in our system, and what the winners desire!

For sensible democracy to flourish; one needs an educated and knowledgeable political cadre; with an aware

and questioning mass of citizen to keep things in line. This we do not have; so once voting is over; the party in power will act and react like "licensed" autocrats masquerading as ideal democrats! Once voted to power; power is all that they care about till the next round of election, when verbosity takes first priority!

Fact of life is that the winning party once government is formed goes about totally dictating and controlling the government mechanism. The winner dictates what is right; with no regard for justification or logic.

They proudly will say that they have the mandate of the people. Once in power they will operate on the precept of government "for the politicians, of the politicians, and by the politicians", nothing else. This is their stock in trade; and what they had been carrying on for over thirty-five years. Why change now?

S.A. Mansoor
Dhaka

Reach out and seek help

The mindless carnage of 26th November in Mumbai has immensely angered the Indian government, people and also us all. We all condemn the terrible act in the strongest possible terms. The Indian government needs to devise means to combat terrorism in its own soil and safeguard its populace, and prevent its escalation in other Asian countries. A pertinent question arises- why does it keep on happening? India experienced terrorist attack in 2003 and then it kept on repeating. Early finger pointing at Pakistan or Bangladesh or Nepal will not help solve the problem, rather it will

alienate them and the situation will turn more difficult.

120 million Muslims in India mostly belong to the economically deprived class. They are not the beneficiaries of the economic boom in India. To their plight were added incidences of Babri Masjid demolition, Gujarat riots and killings, BJP-Shivsen-BHP-RSS anti-Muslim activities, Kashmir factor, apathy of central government etc. Their problems need to be addressed. The Indian government and the majority people of India need to reach out and bring the Muslims to the main stream of financial, social, cultural, political activities. India ought to involve the Muslims in planning and execution of anti-terrorist actions. Lots of homework needs to be done. India should also involve the Pakistan government, intelligence agencies, anti-terrorist agencies, and seek their help in fighting the terrorists. Pakistan knows them best. The present Pakistan government is different from the previous ones. They sound genuinely eager to improve relationship with India and fight fanatic ultra-conservative Muslim terrorists.

The Indian government should not overreact. Anti-Islam or anti-Muslim stances will further aggravate the already volatile situation.

We urge upon the Indian government to arrange high-level meetings of Indian agencies, Pakistani agencies, Indian Muslims, and discuss and devise strategies of fighting the terrorists, and also solve the problems of Indian Muslims and bring them to the mainstream.

Dr. SN Mamoon
One-mail

Seats in public universities

Getting opportunity to study in a public university, undoubtedly, is a major concern for the applicants as well as the guardians. They appear in admission tests in different universities, and finally very few get admission. The number of seats, in proportion to the demand, is very few.

Last year, a newspaper reported that about 150 seats remained unoccupied finally in SUST. Like this, in the public universities around 500 seats remained vacant. The government affords all the basic costs for those empty seats also, but the nation doesn't get return (graduates) from that investment. For example, in the Department of Business Administration, we have space for 65 students in a classroom (they advertise for the same number of seats), but ultimately, we get 55 to 60 students per session. (Because the top ranked students of Kha unit take admission, then they get chance in DU, BUET or medical college and finally cancel their admission).

To minimize this wastage, the authorities should take effective steps so that utilization of our limited resources can be ensured.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Assistant professor
Dept. of Business Administration
Shahjalal University, Sylhet



PHOTO: STAR

Indian propaganda

I watched with horror how some Indian media tried to implicate Bangladesh in the Mumbai terror attack. MSNBC cable TV of USA was feeding from NDTV of India and it was reporting on the very second day that 29 Pakistani and 11 Bangladeshis were in the terror group! MSNBC, I'm sure, was sucked into NDTV's agenda driven, unsubstantiated, innuendo based news. NDTV dished out anti Bangladesh propaganda to US viewers with the help of MSNBC.

CNN's international reporter Nic Robertson was saying this group was trained in Pakistan or Bangladesh! It appears that some quarters in India are making concerted efforts to taint Bangladesh's image. India is playing a blame game after its dismal failure to stop the attack.

Sayed A. Huq
St. Paul, MN, USA

Railways

Bangladesh railway is doing a great job from its introduction. It's one of the most comfortable and secure mode of transportations since the British period. Commuters of our country feel comfortable to make their journey by train because of reasonable prices of tickets. We usually see the long lines of commuters in front of railway stations.

Our railway must be modernised to meet the demands of the people. Md. Zahidul Islam Zibon
Dept. of English
International Islamic University Chittagong

Canadian immigration rules

Due to changes in the Immigration and Refugees Protection Act (IRPA), Federal skilled workers' applications received on or after February 27, 2008 will now be assessed for eligibility according to a set of instructions issued by the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, Canada.

However, this new selection criterion does not apply to candidates who wish to settle in the Province of Quebec as it has its own selection criteria. Federal skilled workers' applications, received before the above cut off date, still will be processed according to the rules that were in effect during the time of their applying.

Md. Sahed Ali
Vancouver
British Columbia
Canada

PSC's decision

The PSC has introduced a new method in the 28th BCS exams. Well, basically a change is for betterment. But the change in BCS exams is a suicidal one-- deduction of 0.5 marks for each wrong answer. Has PSC been highly inspired by the caretaker government's mission against corruption? The drastic decision taken by the PSC can destroy all dreams & hopes of BCS candidates. The PSC should reconsider the decision.

Syed Saifuddin M. Khaled
One-mail

McCain's visit

Needless, to say that the visit of U.S. Senator John McCain, carried much importance. After the Mumbai massacre, the arrival of McCain added a new dimension to the oriental politics.

Anyway, on his short tour McCain raised many international and bilateral issues like terrorism, climate change, RMG sector, promoting human rights, etc.

However, the US should ask itself whether its own role is conducive to achieving the goals set by the international community.

Aiman Bin Shaofiqul Hamid
Dept. of English
International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC)

Irony of our politics

The BNP has flouted the provision of the RPO (in nominating their candidates for the parliamentary polls) which required grassroots leaders to send panels of candidates and then only would the parliamentary board select candidates from that list. The BNPPB has instead unilaterally nominated candidates. To make matters worse they have nominated people with dubious backgrounds, accused criminals (an Aug 21st grenade accused has also got nomination!) and convicted persons. The recent HC verdict barring EPR convicts from polls has been a positive decision and hopefully this will keep away some of the notorious persons. While the AL has followed the grassroots' recommendations (though in some cases they have not), their alliance with the former military dictator H.M. Ershad is a sign of AL's "win at any cost" mentality. Ershad, it appears is keen to get the post of president (as a part of a deal with AL) to lead the last days of his life "respectably."

This is the state of politics in our country where ideology takes a back seat where "winning at any cost" mentality is the main ideology. The BNP has allied itself with anti-liberation forces while the AL with the JP. The same AL who had ousted Ershad in the 90s is now thinking of giving the post of presidency to this military despot. It would be an irony to see this military dictator become president if the AL-led grand alliance comes to power. It would be a slap in the face of the families of Dr. Milton, Nur Hossain (and countless other democracy loving people) who had shed their blood to oust Ershad. In a country where we have seen anti-liberation forces occupying the posts of cabinet, "qualitative change" in politics will be hard to come by. This is the month of December, the month of victory. The martyrs had not died and freedom fighters had not fought to see this Bangladesh. Unless the next generation wakes up and builds a new Bangladesh, our country will not be able to come out of this mess.

Wasif Wahed
Old DOHS
Dhaka

Education and private tuition

Our whole education system is completely enveloped by an invisible curtain namely "Private tuition" which is absolutely responsible for producing the unemployed educated (!) groups. Private tuition is now a better job than teaching in any reputed school or college or university. Most of the teachers are highly interested to serve as an expert "private tutor" rather than a skilled teacher in any educational institution.

For this reason, the students who are regular in their academic classes are being deprived. Moreover, they, the private students, achieve good results through those teachers who taught them in private and the students who did not join the private classes get poor marks in that subject. This is not an ideal situation.

Indeed, the students are being programmed by the situation.

Md. Kamrul Islam Mishu
Kutubi
Dept. of English
International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC)
Chittagong

Mumbai mayhem

Words are insufficient to condemn the terror attack in Mumbai.

Such activities have to be resisted in the interest of humanity at large. Tonmoy Anwar
Chairman, Inspiration Coaching Centre (ICC)
Uttara, Dhaka

Electoral debates

It's really nice to hear that the Election Commission (EC) plans to organise electoral debates on crucial issues before the December elections. It would be really good to get academics and thinkers to ask the political leaders detailed questions on their plans to turn Bangladesh around and also on their visions for the country.

This is very much required to get them thinking they are

entering into an office to do some actual work; and not for courting royalty and propping up their foreign bank accounts. It will also get the Bangladeshi people to see how these leaders think without having a host of advisers to cover them up. Hopefully, people will vote on policy and not on family brand names.

Fazle Karim Chowdhury
Barrister at Law
London, UK

BBC and Awami League

The news story entitled "Dhaka [BCS] exams row sparks violence" on BBC website (Tuesday, 2 December 2008) does not seem to meet the usual BBC standard of neutrality and fairness.

Even if there were any irregularities in the selection process of 27th BCS, the overwhelming majority of the candidates who got selected were qualified on the basis of their merit and competence.

And such 'irregularities' are not foreign in BCS examinations, irrespective of which political party is in power.

My honest observation on the BBC coverage of Bangladesh politics is that the Awami League scores quite well in terms of getting the dividend of its news stories. Shimul Chaudhury
Dhaka

Pakistan and terrorism

"Pakistan rallies support as tension with India rises" was news headlines of some dailies after a couple of days of the Mumbai terror attack. Myself and rest of the Bangladeshis would like to see which country supports the terrorist nation if there is a fourth war between Pakistan and India.

The Pakistani state terrorism is not a new subject to the world and especially to us the Bangladeshis. Just after the independence of Pakistan, the government terrorism was evident when they killed students on 21st February 1952, and detained

many Bengali leaders without charge and their ugly face became visual to the world during the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war when they did not hesitate to kill millions of innocent unarmed civilians. Since 1971 the world has changed and so has the pattern of the Pakistani terrorism, instead of using uniformed terrorists (Pakistani soldiers) they have developed an un-uniformed army of terrorists. Today if a survey can be carried out, one will get to see a significant number of Pakistanis in each and every terrorist organisation the world has, whether they are Islamic or non-Islamic.

The number of suicide bombers today in and around Pakistan has increased significantly and will probably increase more in the coming years as the nation which backs terrorists and stages the drama of fighting the terrorists has never tried to stop the militants who often kill themselves in the name of Islam, though Islam does not permit any terrorist activities at all. Today the Muslims are passing through difficult times due to the Pakistani terror in the name of Islam.

The Indian government said it had proof of a Pakistani link to the Mumbai attacks that killed nearly 200 people, raising the prospect not only of a breakdown of peace efforts between the nuclear-armed nations but of confrontation across their border.

Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmendi
Dhaka

Minister resigns

After terror attacks in Mumbai, the Indian Home Minister resigned as he thought he had failed to do his duty properly for the security of India. With him, the National Security Adviser of India also submitted his resignation.

Our politicians have a lot to learn from it. Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag
Dhaka

Voters' duty

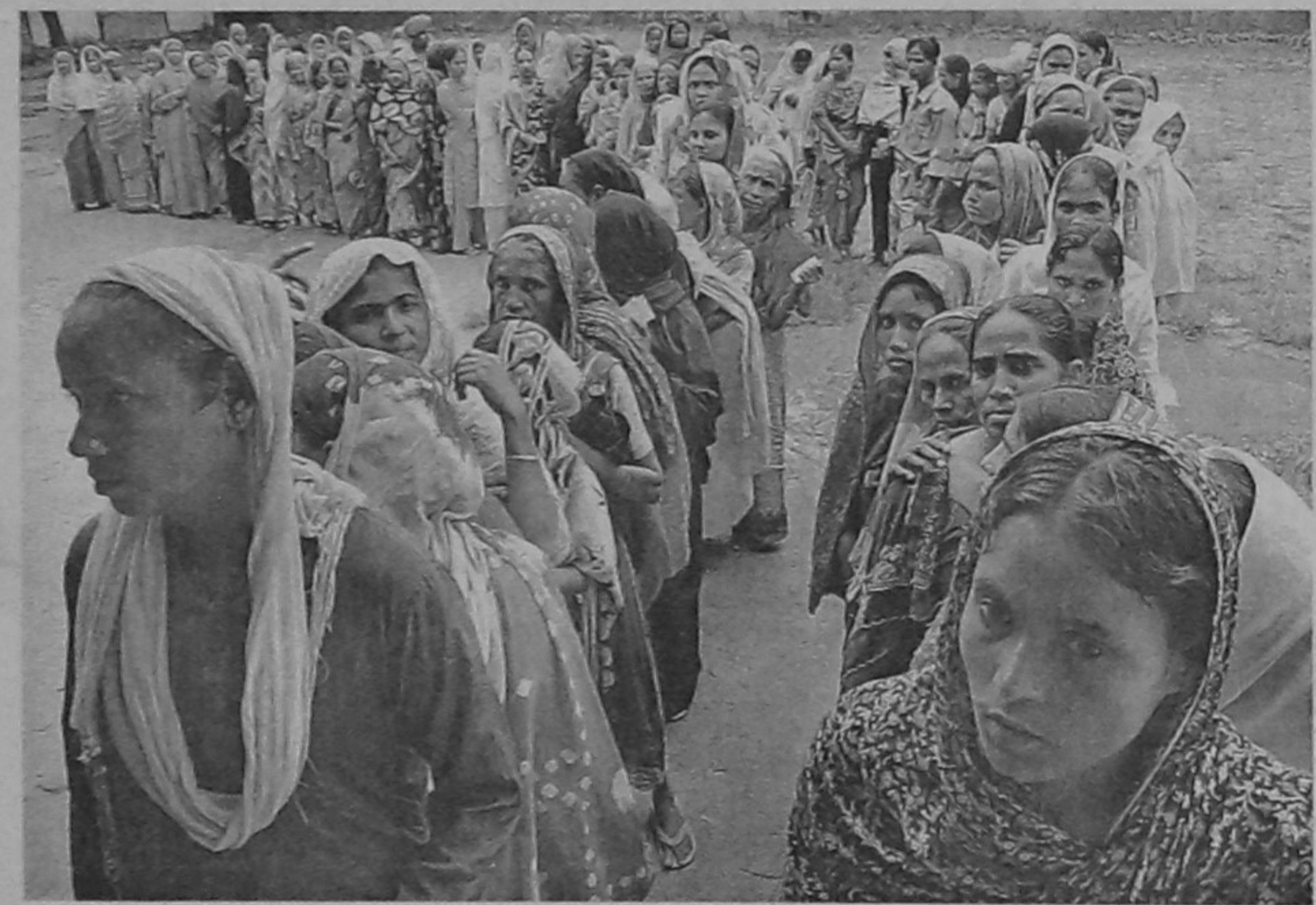
I would like to request all voters of our country to choose honest and patriotic people in the next elections. After a long time we have got this chance to practice our rights and to select the government which will rule this country for the next five years. So, we all have to be very careful

to make the correct decision.

1. Let us not vote for any corrupt person.

2. Let us not vote for any person who was against our liberation war.

Nazakat Ali
One-mail



AH ARIF/DRINKNEWS

Mumbai attacks

Re: Op-Ed: "This fire needs to be put out," by Fareed Zakaria (Dec. 2).

In this context, Fareed Zakaria should take a look why a prominent Pakistani-Canadian scholar thinks that the extremists inside Pakistan in collusion with rogue elements in the ISI were behind the Mumbai attack. Dr. Tarek Fatah, a prominent Pakistani-Canadian scholar and author of Chasing a Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State, in an article, "All signs point to Pakistan," published in Canada's National Post, wrote: "The terrorist mayhem in Mumbai had barely subsided when I received the first e-mail suggesting the attacks had been carried out by agents of Mossad -- Israel's foreign intelligence agency -- masquerading as Islamic terrorists to give Muslims a bad name. ... If at all there was an intelligence agency whose footprints can be spotted at the crime scene, it appears to be rogue elements from Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), which is hell-bent on disrupting India's (recently improving) relations with neighbouring Pakistan."

Dr. Fatah goes on to elaborate: "For two decades, the ISI has been the de-facto government in Pakistan, toppling regimes, aiding the Taliban, giving cover to al-Qaeda fugitives and running a business empire worth billions of dollars. In July, the new democratically elected government in Islamabad, led by Prime Min-

ister Yousaf Raza Gilani, attempted to bring the ISI under civilian control. Under threat of a military coup, it had to perform a humiliating about-face within 24 hours."

Dr. Fatah concludes: "Most security commentators agree that the Deccan Mujahadeen is merely a tag of convenience, and that behind this well-planned terror attack lies Laskar-e-Taiba (LeT), a major militant group fighting in Indian Kashmir -- the same group that has recently warned Zardari to desist from warming up to India."

As such, India should differentiate between the Pakistan's civilian government and its military establishment. The elected government of President Zardari has no control over the military establishment which will never tolerate any civilian interference. In fact, the civilian government lives under the constant fear of being overthrown by the military. Despite constant attacks by the extremists in collusion with rogue elements of the ISI as Dr. Tarek Fatah so correctly pointed out, India must try to cooperate with Pakistan's civilian government and help it to isolate the renegade military elements. Only then this fire can be put out.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Uttara and Purbachal plots

I am a non-resident Bangladeshi living in Canada, working as Software Engineer.

Recently RAJUK invited applications for plot allocation in Uttara and Purbachal. They have given the opportunity for expatriates also, but the time is so short that it is almost impossible to collect all those papers. They asked to scan and email all the papers. I am sure most of the people will have problem to do that because that will be a huge file to email, there will be the bandwidth issue which RAJUK never considered.

Some other inconveniences are listed below:

1. We have to have a job. Is it necessary? In North America and Europe no jobs are stable, already lots of people lost their jobs in current financial crisis but they have their savings to buy a plot in Bangladesh.

2. In application, item no 10. We have to submit our current year tax assessment. We will get our current year's tax assessment in January 2009, RAJUK does not know that.

3. Two photographs, one affidavit, copy of passport and tax assessment notarisation will cost at least 150 dollars (Lawyer charges 25 dollars per signature in Canada).

On behalf of thousands of expatriates in Europe and North America, I am requesting you to help us in this matter.

Humayoun
Performance Specialist
BlackBerry Enterprise Server

Indigenous cultural festival

A three-day indigenous cultural festival was held recently at Bangladesh China Friendship Convention Centre with the slogan "Weave our hearts together with a thousand colourful threads." There a total of 14 ethnic groups got together and they exhibited their handicrafts, traditional attires, and foods and arranged cultural programmes. Besides

indigenous people, this festival attracted others too.

I think if such a festival is organized from time to time, there will be interaction among the citizens from all parts of the country.

Rasel Raymond Dio
St. Xavier Seminary
Bhatikar, Mymensingh



PHOTO: AMRUL RAJU