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Let us change ourselves

After the change of 1/11, the CTG tried its best to bring some changes in political culture, especially in the two major political parties through the minus two formula but clearly failed. The two ladies are now back again to the political arena and resumed their full activities targeting to bring their parties to power through the next general election. Some of the big fish from the major political parties probably will fail to participate in the election due to their conviction in corruption cases but most of the power aspirants are the old faces. So, there will be no qualitative change in politics and consequently in the expectations of the general people for a brighter future. Moreover, the reformist politicians are already in trouble and facing the risk of demise of their political careers.

In fact, nothing will change if the general people do not change. Only changes in individuals will change the society which in turn can change the country. We cannot expect honest leaders if we, the people, are not honest. If we surrender to money and muscle power, how we can expect good people to participate in the elec-



RAJ ANIKAT/DRINKNEWS

tion and be elected people's representatives? The CTG that failed in most of its endeavours will probably succeed in holding a free, fair, impartial and credible general election and now it is our duty to come forward and show the courage of voting for the honest and sincere candidates who will work for the people, and not for their own fortunes.

Now there may be some controversy about the definition of "good people". We all may not agree about

the qualities of a "good people". But if we believe in the Almighty Allah, the Creator of this universe and what are there, then we can take His definition that says, "The best people are those who are the most God-fearing." There is no doubt if someone truly believes in Allah he will always try to refrain from misdeeds and malpractices because he knows even if he can escape punishment in this world he will have to face the wrath after death which "every soul shall have a taste".

Engr. Md. Aminul Hoque
Khalishpur, Khulna

Thoughts on Victory

December is here again. So will be the 16th of December. Our Victory Day. We have been celebrating Victory Day for the last 37 years. Yet we never felt like victorious in anyway. Instead we felt like vanquished with each passing year. And those, who were defeated on 16 December, 1971, smirk with arrogance and vengeance. With every passing year, these anti-liberation elements are multiplying like amoeba and slowly but steadily enwrapping our everyday lives and the way of our living.

The failure of so called secular political parties and intellectual polity to establish at least the feelings of social justice among the masses will eventually create a force that will realize people's expectations through mob justice. Will our intelligentsia wake up?

Asif Khan
Circular Road, Dhanmandi
Dhaka

Congratulations, Hillary!

Heartly congratulations to Hillary Rodham Clinton on her appointment as the Secretary of State of the United States of America. I also appreciate President-elect Barack Obama for the appropriate selection of the Secretary of State for his cabinet. In my opinion, Hillary is one of the most competent women in the United States for appointment to such an important post. Meanwhile, I endorse Hillary Clinton's statement which she made recently saying "America is a place founded on the idea that everyone should have the right to live up to his or her God-given potential, and it is that same ideal that must guide America's purpose in the world today. And while we are determined to defend our freedom and liberties at all costs we also reach out to the world again, seeking common cause and higher ground."

I sincerely hope that the former first Lady Hillary Clinton will be successful in her new assignment and contribute significantly to the overall improvement of the United States' international relations and global communications.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Chairman
Department of Agricultural Extension & Information System
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

EC's decision on FEMA

What's wrong with the Election Commission? Why have they rejected FEMA? This is a recognised and experienced organisation having thousands of real volunteer-observers throughout the country.

We urge you to write about it and convince the Election Commission to allow FEMA to monitor the election and give general public their observation reports.

Halima
Rajshahi

I came to know from the news media that FEMA did not get the accreditation from the Election Commission to observe the upcoming parliamentary election.

I know about FEMA since it came out with the observation report on Magura-4 by-election.

Since then like so many people of the country I also wait for the FEMA report during the election. But this time the decision taken by the Election Commission disheartened me and I request them to withdraw the ban and allow FEMA to observe the upcoming general election.

FEMA is the leading election monitoring organisation in the country and has set up the standards of election monitoring in a systematic way. In the past we saw FEMA election observation reports to be lauded by a cross section of people. In most of the cases FEMA reports played a supplementary role with the Election Commission to enhance the confidence of the mass people about the outcome of elections.

Rashin
Dhaka

AL's game plan

The Awami League declared that they would form a unity government if voted to power.

I am utterly disgusted and appalled as:

Firstly, it is surely paving the way for BAKSAL and ways to confirm a permanent Hasina Dynasty by subjugating opponents with political enticements.

Secondly, how can the Awami League be so hypocritical to make or even think of making Ershad the president whom we struggled to throw out through a mass uprising?

Mufassil Islam
Human Rights Advocate
UK

"Law-avoiding" politicians

Your two front page reports (Dec:06) by Liton & Hassan; and another from Natore only goes to expose the character of almost all of our politicians who sadly represent us! For them breaking the law of the land is as common as having a cup of tea. There capability is in bluffs, lies, exploitation and fooling the people, which appears to be their expertise!

Respectively of their party affiliation; which they also change as easily as changing "lungis"; for politicians, law breaking, tax evasion and criminal activities are the common stock in trade! No wonder, Bangladesh is considered by everyone in the world as one of the most corrupt countries.

All this is due to our politicians who are mostly responsible for this dirty image.

Now one can realise why political parties want all restrictions on nomination to be scrapped! But this is what no conscious citizen wants! We have had enough of being taken for a ride, for a long time over the last 37 years. Possibly, what the political parties desire is that the incumbent will only declare that he or she is alive and nothing else.

What they earn, how they earn it; what they have and how they got it is nobody's business. Asking for these by the authorities is interfering

with their fundamental rights to "beg, borrow, buy or steal"!
A "No" voter
Dhaka

Moral erosion

Terrorism, murder, assault, mysterious deaths, hijacking, black money, child and female trafficking, acid throwing, unfair means in exams, leakage of questions, drug business, toll extortion, adulteration of medicine and foods etcetera are the symptoms of moral erosion.

Regrettably, nobody is taking a clear position against all such evils.

Habibur Rashid Ismail
Jamea Rahmania Fadil
Madrasa, Chaitenyarhat
Chittagong

Victory, election

People of Bangladesh are going through a gripping month-- December 08. For, in this month, as always after 1971, we celebrate the victory over the occupation Pak army in Bangladesh through a concerted armed struggle with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the founding leader. We conceded huge loss to them, but won the freedom-- we emerged as an independent nation. We mourn the monumental loss, and celebrate our historical victory at the same time --- we pledge/vow or renew the spirit that went into ousting the illegal and the ugly from the land.

This month round, however, we'll be going for a free and fair election to be held on 29th of this month. This time election has got many vital issues attached to it.

Rafiqul Islam Rime
Agrabad, Chittagong

Battle of Plassey

Like millions of mothers, my mother also told me the tale of Siraj and his mother-wife-daughter in my boyhood, where Siraj was sketched as a hero and Clive as a villain. Siraj was defeated in the Battle of Plassey through a conspiracy. As a result, the English ruled this land for about 190 years.

However, in the book 'Clive of India' by Nirad C. Chaudhuri published by Jaico Press Pvt. Ltd. in 1977, Siraj was depicted in the chapter 'Conquest of Bengal (1756-1759). I know that the talented and famous writers have the command over people's mind and they can chop the myth of or present things in their own way. I am mentioning a few lines: "Siraj was badly equipped, both intellectually and morally, to cope with the stratagem of the seasoned veterans, both Muslim and Hindu, most of whom were trying to gain upper hand in the affairs of the State and use him as a mere pawn in the game with a hand stretched towards the traders for a warm grasp." Chapter: The Battle of Plassey and after, P-1,2.

Mobarak Ali
RK Mission Road
Gopibagh, Dhaka

Future of Pakistan

As much as I admire the new Pakistani civil government, I feel less optimistic about whether it can finally put the genie back into the bottle that its military had created in the name of national interest. The sixty years' Indo-centric policy has resulted in nothing but a weak state with no purpose and aims. Paradoxically, it has become a victim of its own creation.

The west may have patronized Pakistan to create the monster but it has moved on to find new willing friends whereas Pakistan is still hoping for a sympathetic helping hand for its faithful service to the west.

Can it blame the west for its all ills? Not after sixty years' witless military misrule! With Osama in the hills, non-state monsters on the loose and no money in the treasury, I do not see how a weak government can deal with such a mess.

Can Zardari and Gilani create a miracle in Pakistan? Can it truly take Pakistani military under civilian control? I dearly hope so, because the alternative is really scary.

Shamol Saha
Boston University
USA

Pakistan scene

MB Naqvi very correctly identifies the real causes of Pakistan's woes and suggests the methods for combating the Taliban. His statement that Taliban are moved by an ideology and it cannot be defeated by guns because ideas cannot be killed by shooting in the head is very pertinent. But I am afraid that such ideological battle against Taliban cannot be won in Pakistan by the methods he proposed. Pakistan's very reasons d'tre is intolerance of all ideas outside religion. The national curricula from primary to tertiary level of education in Pakistan conveys the ideology of Islam only. Pakistan's official history in its textbooks describe the birth of Bangladesh as a vile conspiracy of Hindu India to exact revenge on Islamic Pakistan for the creation of the country in 1947 and Bangladesh in Pakistani public perception is still East Pakistan!! The madrassah education system in Pakistan is highly organized and developed and teaches Taliban ideology and produces its armed jihadi battalions. The army is the self-proclaimed defender of Islam, Islamic culture and ideology in South Asia. The army actually owns the Pakistan state. The elected government in Pakistan has only outward trappings of power for exhibiting in media. Pakistan army's power lays in its guns, money and men. There are no secular social groups, civil society associations and political parties who represent the exploited illiterate people. The people are so thoroughly brainwashed that they are unable to develop a balanced view. The grip of the triumvirate mullahs, military and the punjabi-muhajir elites on society, culture,

politics, economy and minds is so complete that any liberal-humanist education system based on secular worldview is unthinkable there. There are no intellectuals in Pakistan who can present a countervailing humanist ideology against the dogma proclaimed by the state. The most terrible aspect of this structure is the supremacy of ISI over every institution, organization of Pakistan and its tentacles have reached every corner of South Asia. All jihadi organizations across the subcontinent were spawned by the ISI. And it has the support of Pentagon which nourishes it.

Only the people of Pakistan can defeat this monster but who will lead them? And where is the humanist ideology that will fight against the Taliban ideology of annihilation?

Ibne Azad
Agargaon, Dhaka

Re "Mumbai fall-out," by Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury (Dec. 4).

In this context, Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury may take a look at what a prominent Pakistani-Canadian says about Pakistan's role in the Mumbai terrorist attack. In a column: "All signs point to Pakistan." Tarek Fatah, a Pakistani-Canadian scholar and author of Chasing a Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State, wrote in Toronto's National Post: "If at all there was an intelligence agency whose fingerprints can be spotted at the crime scene (in Mumbai), it appears to be the 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 touched the crux of the crisis when he said: "Just a month ago, the founder of one of Pakistan's most feared armed Islamist groups had accused Zardari of being dovish toward India, and criticized him for referring to militants in Indian-held Kashmir as 'terrorists.' Then this week, the so-called Deccan Mujahedeen struck against India with the clear aim of triggering a Hindu backlash against the country's minority Muslims -- with the obvious attendant danger to Pakistan-India relations."

The obvious conclusion of all this is that unless Pakistan's elected government takes control of the ISI, it will always subvert any attempts to improve relations with India. India should also realise how helpless Pakistan's elected government is vis-à-vis its powerful military and any military response will only help those who are hostile to improved Indo-Pakistan relations.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

Poison of hatred

Fareed Zakaria's article on terrorism in Bombay published in you pages on 2nd December has its beginning that in my views can be linked to the American proxy war in Afghanistan to throw out the Russians. That was the start given to the Jihadists. About this Zakaria states, "The Pakistan government has created, supported and financed Islamic Jihadists for decades." This is not totally correct. Zakaria, however, conveniently forgets that this was done with the full support and financing by the USA in the first place! It was these Jihadists who fought the

proxy war for the USA; while Afghanistan was fully under control of the Russians. Godless communism was an excellent political motivation for the Jihadists that led to the birth of al-Qaida, a CIA misadventure that badly misfired against them!

That was the beginning of the nightmare; the "freedom fighters"; created and trained in the soil of Pakistan were ripe for action motivated with religious zeal and extremism, which was cleverly tainted again by CIA as the Islamic characteristic. Elements of the committed Jihadists were out of control, and could not, and have not still been contained by the Pakistan government. Destruction of the Marriott Hotel is the clear example. Unfortunately, Zakaria, a US citizen, did not say anything about it! Why, one can only wonder?

After their success in Afghanistan; the greed for Iraqi oil could no longer be ignored by America. Iraq was attacked on the basis of falsehoods and lies created and fermented by CIA; and a brainless Bush went full steam ahead; not bothering for any UN resolution; with the belief that "Might is Right"! No wonder, UN resolutions for USA's pet Israel and its master are just scraps of so much wastepaper; that is just to be ignored! Can one then wonder why US, British and Israeli people were the prime targets of the terrorist attack in Bombay?

Why Bombay in Maharashtra? Again it could be the reaction of the open extremism practised by the Bal Thakarey family. It is their total intolerance and faith and support for violent Hindu extremists; the Indian counterpart of the Jihadists; that has attracted the terrorists! Yet the Indian government goes along with them; and who knows they could again govern India! Naturally; for every action, there is a reaction. Majority of Indians may have forgotten the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat; perpetrated, where even the state law enforcers too reportedly joined hands with the killers.

Zakaria states, "Blame first and foremost the terrorists." But what about the Thakerite goons and extremists of Maharashtra who are breeding hatred among the two communities?

Analyt
Dhaka

An appeal

We are the teachers of non-government high schools. Near about 98% students of secondary level are studying here. But we are getting a very poor salary. When a teacher lives in a poor condition, then teaching properly in classroom becomes very difficult.

The major political parties should include the issue in their election manifestoes.

Dipak Chakraborty
Assistant Teacher
Krishnagobinda High school
Netrakona

Cultural artefacts

Those who broke the cultural artefacts thinking they are doing a service to Islam are wrong. According to Islam, a sculpture or statue is simply a piece of earthly material. A devotee of Allah should not be moved by such things.

Let's not mix up religion with culture and let's all concentrate on building a prosperous Bangladesh which our fathers and grandfathers dreamt of.

Sohel Ahmed
Dhanmondi, Dhaka



SHEHIN HASAN/DRINKNEWS

Make Dhaka clean

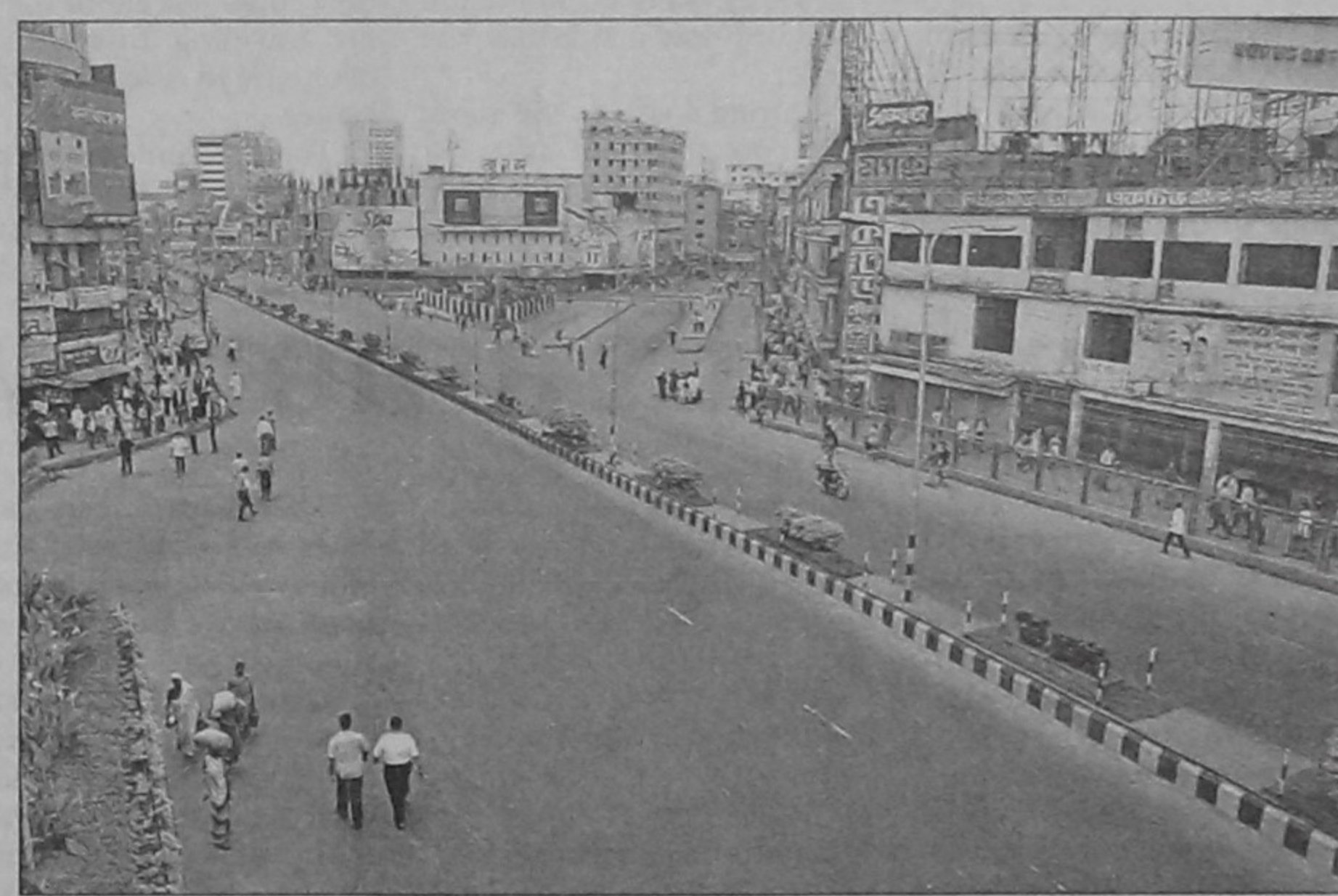


PHOTO: STAR

Are we only supposed to dream of a clean Dhaka city? I just want to point out the huge benefits a clean road can bring to us. It has both long and short-term results, at a very small cost.

The cost of not cleaning is simply HUGE and alarming, a cost that is we are paying already!

Currently, Dhaka does not in the least bit demonstrates that it is the capital city of a sovereign country! Where is the Mayor and his team? Busy preparing for the election; well, even otherwise he would be extremely passive and indifferent to Filth, all the year round. It is simply pathetic!

A clean Dhaka would:
Give a sense of well-being.
Reflect health instead of sickness!
Clean up the air, reduce dust.
Remove eyesore/s.
BROADEN the streets.
Be relatively easy for the vehicular or human traffic (likely to minimise traffic snarls).
Inspire pride in the citizens (does it sound far-fetched?).
Be able to estimate how long it would take to attend a meeting.
Ensure fewer number of 'sick-days' of the employees.
Improve productivity.
Also, remotely, people will feel

motivated and so positive, and 'pray' for the Mayor.

Accompanied by a reasonably effective, law abiding traffic, all of the above would bring a welcome change we need for better productivity and general well-being.

I strongly believe it is not much to ask for from the Capital City of a sovereign country.

Let there be a small "urban" tax imposed, as an earning for DCC to help clean up the city. Let people get the minimum benefit from the capital. After all, we are in the celebrating mood of 400 years of the city. What better time to clean Dhaka thoroughly? A distant dream?

And now that the Eid ul Azha is over, we really ought to ensure that the clean-up of the slaughtering should be the TOP PRIORITY.

Let us Celebrate 400 years of Dhaka with the pledge to keep Dhaka clean and use Bin Bags and dispose garbage in the special large bins provided by DCC.

Mr Mayor, you are so passionate to serve people, so please keep Dhaka clean, and reap the benefits of well-being, happiness, health and productivity.

Syed Imtiaz Ali
Banani, Dhaka