



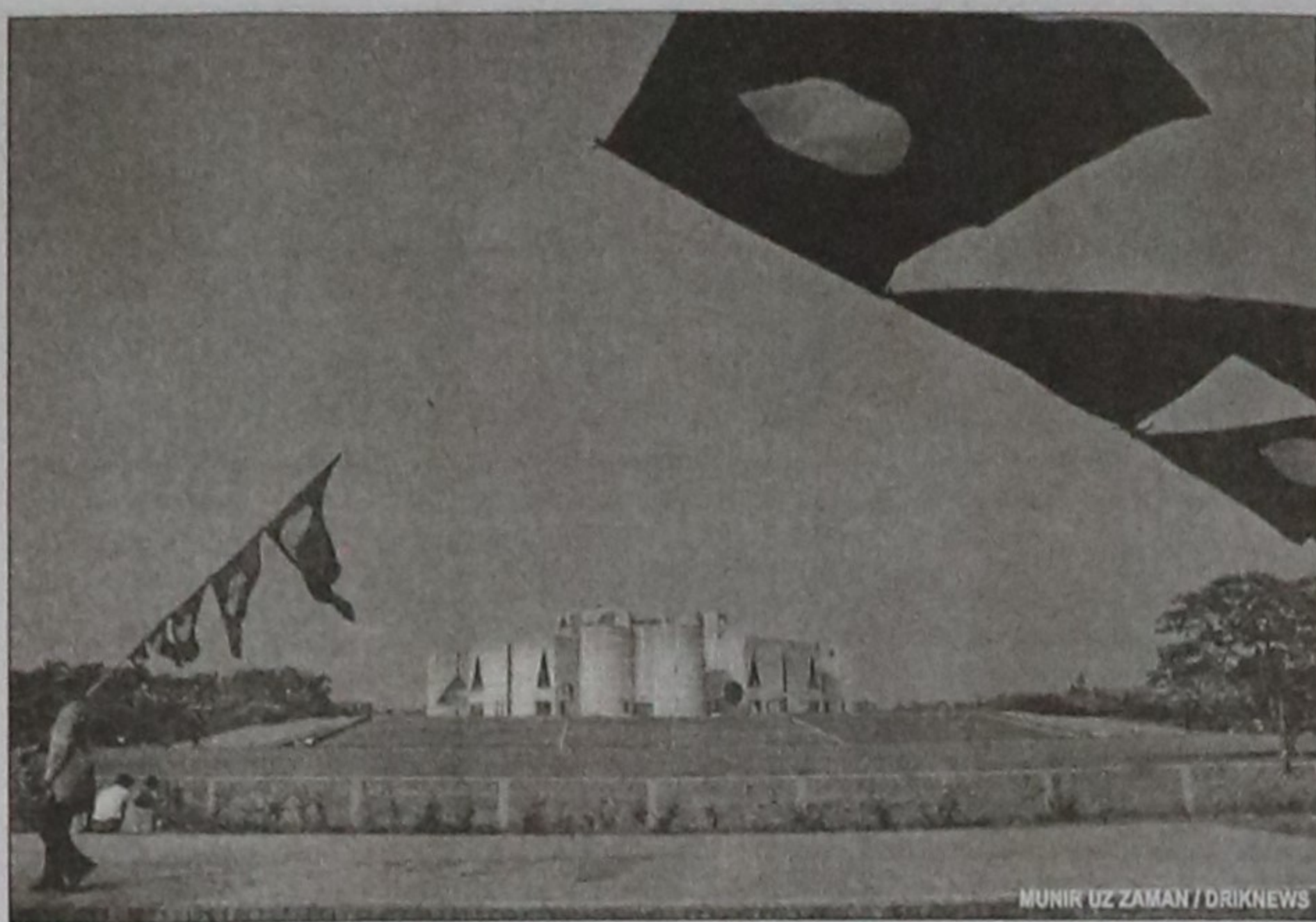
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## People's aspirations

The ninth parliamentary polls are scheduled to be held on December 29, 2008 as already announced by the caretaker government. The countrymen have hailed the decision, as they desperately want to see an elected government with the advent of the New Year.

They sincerely desire and hope that the upcoming polls will be free, fair, participatory and credible. People will vote to power honest and eligible candidates who will form an effective and meaningful parliament. The new government will hopefully steer the country in the right direction. Good governance will bid adieu to all sorts of misrule, mismanagement and misfortune.

The country achieved independence some 37 years ago but the fruits of independence still continue to elude the general masses. Poverty alleviation and solution to the problem of unemployment continues to remain a far cry. The economic development and advancement of the country is being persistently hindered by political unrest and instability. Foreign investors tend to lose their interest to invest their capital



MUNIR UZ ZAMAN / DRINKNEWS

in our country.

There is no denying that political instability has been a major challenge to the optimum growth of our national economy. On the other hand, corruption is our number one problem and is a major hindrance to development. The general people wholeheartedly expect that the new government will carry on the (ongoing) war against corruption and misappropriation.

The people of the country want to live peacefully, free from all sorts of anarchy, chaos, conflicts and confrontations. They want a balanced development of the economy and the

country. They seriously want to see an end to all kinds of street agitation, hartals, siege and blockade programmes etc. The political parties need to reach a consensus on the issue.

The hopes and aspirations of the common people ahead of the next parliamentary polls are not few. It is, therefore, their responsibility to choose and elect honest and competent candidates.

On the other hand, the political parties have to shoulder that responsibility to ornament the ninth parliament with members or representatives having honesty, integrity, political wis-

dom and above all, acceptability to the people. They need to put an end, in the first place, to all sorts of nomination trade. The losing political parties will have to respect people's verdict by accepting the polls results.

The next general elections will obviously facilitate the smooth transfer of power to an elected government and cement the path to democracy. The countrymen hope so and they are eagerly looking forward to them (the upcoming elected government) for good governance to foster a better future.

M. Anwaruz Zaman  
Jhawtala, Comilla

## Political participation or partisanship?

Voter registration this time in Bangladesh under the interim government has been setting records. With public interest so high, it's easier predicting a blockbuster general election on 29th December if everything goes as planned. But can our democracy survive all this heightened interest in the political process? After all we've a legacy of family-dominated politics, and the link between political participation and partisanship is often unclear. We observed in the past that partisans participated in politics, and voted more regularly and with greater enthusiasm than those who resided in the ideological middle. Although most experts then and now agree that high voter participation is generally a good thing, but we also observed that partisanship-driven

turnout also has its dark side.

Extreme interest goes with extreme partisanship, and might culminate in rigid fanaticism that could destroy the democratic processes, if generalised. Therefore, a lack of interest by some people is not without its benefits too. In other words, a healthy democracy needs the uncommitted middle, the fence straddled guys and the apathetic as much as it the firebrand activists. Indeed, in a nation so torn by the obsession of partisans, it is those of us who aren't all that in love of either side who give politicians the room to compromise, which, of course, is the art that politics is supposed to be all about. But these days, sceptics and the uncommitted are becoming few and far between. The number of voters in the middle has become smaller and smaller, and hence there are fewer people willing to hear what both sides have to say. In the late 1970s, or early 1980s, maybe 30 out of 100 voters could be persuaded to vote for

either major party. According to educated guess, that number may have decreased to less than 10 per cent today. The squeezing out of moderates in the electorate has since led to the decline in the number of moderates in our politics.

Some have blamed the rise of mass-politicisation for the polarisation. Others point to the hyper-partisan areas that parliament members now draw each decade to protect their incumbency. But there is something much more profound and far-reaching going on. Given all the media choices they have, Bangladeshis are increasingly segregating into fenced communications communities, choosing to read and hear only the things that bolster their views. More important, it is found that Bangladeshis over the last 30 years or so also are literally, physically segregating themselves by ideology. Before 1975, only a few had a partisan mind, but in between 1991 to 2006, more

and more partisans saw total victory, and homogeneity breeds more homogeneity. Political minorities tend to vote less and even withdraw from other forms of civic life, while political majorities participate in politics, and vote more. In any given uneven environment, the triumphant majority opinion hardens, the whites become whiter and the blues bluer, and cross-party communication stops. And when communication stops, each side begins to view the other as more extreme.

What this all means is that as we separate ourselves into ever-narrower groups, our votes are becoming more of an affirmation of a group than an expression of a civic opinion. As we seclude ourselves in like-minded enclaves, we're finding it harder to reach a national consensus.

Sirajul Islam  
Pisciculture Housing Society  
Shyamoli, Dhaka

## Maintain sanctity of mosque

Baitul Mukarram is our national mosque, a religious place. Everyone should respect this place. As it is a place for praying to Allah, the Merciful, no worldly activities should be done in this place. But we have observed a few political parties starting their political activities from this mosque, spoiling the sanctity of this mosque which they should not. This place is not any party's central office.

I request them to respect this place as a place for religious activities alone. I also request the present government to ban all types of political activities in and around this national mosque.

Anwar  
Shatmosjid Road  
Dhaka

## Last desire!

One news item published in your daily on 26th November under the heading "Saifur's last desire in politics" has attracted my attention. Mr. Rahman is reported to have boasted about his being the senior most Finance Minister in Asia announcing the highest number of national budgets in the sub-continent. He has also claimed that during his stint as FM there was more development in Bangladesh than other neighbouring countries.

Time has not come yet to pass judgement as to whether there was real development in the country. But there was certainly unprecedented development of the members of his family!  
ASM Abdul Aziz  
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

## Cotton spinning mills

Our Chief Advisor during his last visit to the Indian Capital had a meeting with the Prime Minister of India in which he emphasized an action plan to reduce the huge trade imbalance with India. Non-tariff barrier introduced by India acts as hindrance to entry of our products opposed to the Cul-de-Sac rules followed by our country. So it is irrational to ask for such favour as each country adopts policies suitable for its interests. Ironically, our Trade Policy suits the other country.

Our trade policy has made the Cotton Spinning Sector depressed due to pouring in huge quantity of Cotton Yarn by land route from India daily to feed the composite textile mills. Devaluation of the Indian currency by about 17-18% has made their export business favourable to the detriment of our interest. Our Cotton Spinning Mills serving as backward linkage to our RMG industries became non-competitive due to a) Import of raw cotton at high price now reduced internationally by about USC 25/30 per pound due to economic meltdown and b) Imported cotton yarn. This sector has special status in the economy for saving foreign currency and employment of a few million people. Failure by the policy makers to make a thorough review of import of yarn urgently shall cause untold losses to the sector, create chaos for its inability to retain employment, hold back repayment of debt to the financial institutions involving billions of taka in the form of loan and advance and eventually shall be a nightmare scenario in the whole country. Therefore, it is very much expected that our government will urgently make industry friendly plans to ensure that cotton spinning mills are run on commercial basis and protected from uneven external competition. Perhaps duty draw back facility for composite mills (15% customs duty on imported 'cotton yarn' should be enough to see off closure threat of our mills.

The World Bank has already forecast that our export earnings and remittances are likely to shrink in the near future in view of global financial crisis and, therefore, management in the downturn is very important for the economy. Demand of our RMG products in the international market is also falling for which offloading people from factories is imminent, let alone launching new ventures. So, every firm is now safeguarding its cash and desperately trying to find money to meet basic obligations like paying their employees and bank debts.

KC Rezaul Huq  
Lalmatia, Dhaka

## Scientific democracy!

Science teaches us how to understand the world by reasoning and asking questions. An ordinary man knows that night will follow day, but he does not know why it happens. Scientists know the reason why night follows day it is because the earth rotates on its axis.

Scientific Democracy is a new political system that is founded on truth, logic, and social morality. In this system, the rights of the citizens - their human rights - are guaranteed by the system itself. In "Scientific Democracy" every citizen can participate in problem-solving, law-making or decision-making. Thus, the government becomes a government of the people, by the people, for the people. Every citizen has the right to dispute the laws and decisions made by those in authority. Thus, the Will of those in authority becomes the General Will of the People of the respective country.

Scientists have lots of valuable contribution in making human rights a reality. They have defended the freedom to engage in scientific inquiry and to report their findings without interference. They have applied their knowledge and skills to reveal truths about human rights violations. The primary requirement for a scientist is honesty. Scientists are just people, like everyone else.

Scientists have a unique and vital role in giving visibility to the neglected right, which elevates fundamental scientific values, such as equitable access to scientific knowledge, scientific freedom, and international cooperation, to universal government obligations. There are evidences of war crimes and crimes against humanity; the introduction of information management techniques to illuminate large-scale human rights violations, and the use of satellite imagery to document the destruction of communities in remote locations around the world. Each of these cases reveals what is possible when scientists treat human rights as an area suitable for robust scientific inquiry.

The greatest challenge is for the scientific community to become a constituency for human rights. Many scientists avoid such involvement as too political. Contributions of scientists to human rights are limitless so long as they are applied with scientific integrity and an awareness of the boundaries of science and policy. The scientific community can be requested to add its expertise and voice to

global efforts to ensure that all governments respect, protect, and fulfil that which is fundamental to human life as well as to human rights.

People of Bangladesh are going to vote for establishing a democratic government in a few days. The political parties have already given their election manifestoes with various slogans that are attractive to the voters who are the most important people to the candidates at the moment. To achieve human rights through democracy solid methodologies, careful techniques and effective mechanisms are essential components. Engagement of science and scientists is the prime necessity for bringing real and effective democracy. As such scientific democracy is the best tool to fulfil the goals of the nation.

Prof. Lutfor Rahman  
Founder Vice-Chancellor  
Science and Technology  
University in Rural  
Bangladesh

## Mumbai carnage

Terrible sounds rocked the very foundation of Mumbai, breaking the deadly silence lying over the business hub of India on the ghastly night of 27th November, 2008. Flashes of spark lighting up the starry sky, silhouetting the azure sky with a layer of dark orange paint. Dead bodies were strewn everywhere, the bodies gushing out blood from the wounds. Blood-gleaming, red, chilling the bone to the marrow. Watching this frightening scene on the television, a question surfaced in my mind "How long will the terrorists shackle us with the bond of their crazy actions?" It is a matter of great concern that the Deccan Mujahadeen has become evidently so powerful that it can kill hundreds of innocent human beings.

The Mumbai carnage was basically a planned attack by a group of gunmen in the city's busy areas like Chhatrapati Shivaji Station, Kama Hospital, Nariman House and two hotels "Taj and Oberoi Trident". The motive behind this second 9/11 was most probably to disrupt India's flourishing business sector and to leave a black mark on the tourist field. The militants held hostage the people staying in Taj, Oberoi and Nariman House and ultimately, they wanted to get away from the situation. Their escape was prevented by the searchlights surrounding the horror-struck area. The night spurring fear inside the heart, passed on with the militants and the people inside the buildings.

Later, in the morning, commandos stormed the Oberoi Trident Hotel and

Nariman House and after a raging battle and gunfire exchanges, they made it free from the gunmen. They rescued many tourists including two Americans, a Briton, two Japanese nationals and many Indians. Airline crew members were also evacuated from the luxurious hotel and people were seen leaving with an expression of relief etched on their faces.

The commandos attempted to save the lives of ordinary human beings, although a few Jews were killed in the Jewish centre.

A member of India's commando unit had stated, "The terrorists showed no sense of pity when killing unarmed civilians and they were obviously trained to use AK-47 rifles and handle the explosives. Their preparations for this long siege were only possible by extensive practice on techniques to deal with such operations."

In the meantime, amid the bloodshed, the national security forces managed to free the Taj Hotel by killing the remaining gunmen and thus putting an end to this drama carried out by the so called Deccan Mujahideen.

It is already known that India has been shaken by a lot of terrorist attacks in the recent years and Mumbai siege reveals a gaping hole in the security the government should provide to its citizens.

The Indian Prime Minister pointed his finger to the arch-enemies, Pakistan, as the foreign ground from which the militants were getting their back-up support. Already the Indian authorities have pressurized the Pak President which led to the confinement of the leader of Laskar-e-Tayyeba.

Islam never provokes such insane acts as displayed in Mumbai and nor does any other religion. Those who do it in the name of Islam do not really know the true meaning of religion.

Many years have elapsed since Al-Qaeda has come into being but we never looked into the depths of these groups -- their source of money, their bizarre way of influencing people to hurl themselves into the abyss of crime, causing anguish to a thousand families whose near and dear ones had become victims of their outrageous attack.

The tormented cries and weeping of those poor mothers, who had lost their sons, daughters, must not go unanswered. It is high time that we take some firm actions to eradicate the base of terrorism and violence.

Shatabdi Biswas  
A student  
Paramount School and  
College  
Rajshahi

## Global warming

Day by day scientists, experts and analysts are becoming more and more captivated by the extensive burning of fossil fuels and their hazardous consequences on natural habitats we live in. The leaders of the most affluent countries of the world, the G20 as they call it, failed to reach a constructive and effective conclusion regarding this significantly devastating effect. But what can we do as mere residents of this planet to save it from the disastrous future that lay ahead? The answer to this challenging question and a pragmatic solution to this crisis was given by the most influential person that the world ever witnessed, our

beloved Prophet (Pbuh) more than 1400 years ago. He advised the people, "If you uproot one plant or tree, replace it by two".

Once again we should think globally and act locally. If each and every human inhabitant of this vast planet starts to work tirelessly with utmost devotion beginning from his own locality, then surely we can eradicate global warming once and for all and make the world a better place to live in.

Waheedur Rahman  
DOHS Baridhara  
Manarat Dhaka In'll College, Dhaka



## Election manifesto

The two major political parties, the Awami League and the BNP, have unveiled their election manifestoes to the people to share with them what these two major parties have in mind to run the country in the next five years, if elected.

Surprisingly, election manifestoes of these two major parties are splendid with well-defined goals, people oriented ideas and have similarity to each other with little exceptions.

Both the parties want to make fast progress on many development issues and revitalization of many specific infrastructure developments aiming to make the country a middle range (national) income state by the middle of next decade.

The manifestoes of both the parties have been acclaimed and applauded by many professional groups, economists and social thinkers and business groups, social reformers and intellectuals.

The general masses of the country are very passionately looking forward to how these two major parties live up to their election manifestoes and the election mandates, having experienced 1/11/2007.

Many of the development sectors are in a stalemate, despite many positive improvements. But the current high prices of foods and daily essentials have put the common people and daily earners in a very precarious position and many of them are half fed and have been struggling to survive.

Since independence the country has made progress in many sectors, like garments, infrastructure, educational development, remittance from wage earners, the GDP rate also remains moderately good despite many impediments like political uncertainty, power cuts, natural disasters and corruption etc.

Over the last couple of years we came across a number of election manifestos of the major political parties and all those good initiatives were very nicely jotted down with eye catching words, but after going to power many of them either put them under the table or carried them out partially. I am sure 1/11 will remain a source of learning, we should proceed steadily to achieve our objectives by formulating a very pragmatic action plan to keep pace with the global needs and progress, so that the country could easily move forward.

We don't want to see any more political crisis,



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unnecessary hartal, harassment, destruction and damage of national properties.

We expect a working relationship between the ruling and opposition parties and some good plans have been included in the election manifestoes of the two parties for achieving this goal.

Nasarullah  
One-mail

I am really disheartened to read the election manifesto announced by the two major parties the AL and the BNP. I was optimistic that they would take a clear position on student politics in their manifestoes. But my assumption is wrong. I do not know why the two parties are not interested to ban student politics, which is based on political leaders' interest not the students' interest.

I observed student politics very closely when I was a student of Dhaka University. I have seen that they always work for the leaders. I have never seen their protests, meetings, slogans and strikes being held for the common students.

So why do we need the so-called student politics which is not related to students' well being at all? Can you (the two leaders) please give us a proper roadmap in connection with student politics if you come to power in the upcoming elections?

Sharif  
Melbourne, Australia