



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

## Restoring democracy



AMADUL HUQ / DRINKNEWS

We know that our national election is going to be held on 29 December. Every party is very much busy wooing the voters with their various activities like meetings, seminars, slogans etc.

In a democratic country like Bangladesh, people elect their representatives who will work for the people and development of the country. For this reason, free and fair election is the precondition of democracy. In order to return to democracy, which has been missing since 2007, every voter is waiting for 29 December.

The present government has created this situation after a long time so, as a voter, I would like to thank them for this forward-moving step.

MD Shehabul Anwar  
Dept. of English  
IIUC

## Irresponsible utterances

During this vigorous election campaigns all politicians, particularly the top ones, must mind their utterances in public meetings and in front of the media. Irresponsible comments may cost them votes and change public perceptions. They should not take the people for granted. They cannot fool them with their lies, false and impractical promises.

Gone are the days of cheap politics. People are more conscious and aware of their past roles. To lead the nation they have to be above board. They should be sorry for their past mistakes and must regret those in public, while promising this hapless nation a better future. Their appeals to the CTG on behalf of the defaulters to allow them to contest elections, irrespective of their past crimes, are despicable and set a dangerous precedent. If leaders advocate corruption before coming to power, what can the nation hope for? As leaders they have to set examples of good character and governance.

They cannot and should not justify their past misdeeds. Such attempts will have a negative impact on public opinion. People are no longer interested in their blame game, rather they only want to hear what the politicians can and will do for the nation, after assuming power. We would like to leave behind a better world for our coming generations. We want to live truly as an independent nation and not go by diktats from outside.

So, politicians should mind our history and be cautious before they open their mouths. Else they will only fool themselves. It is sincerity alone that will pay dividends. A.B. Mohammed Zakaria  
Staines, Stanwell  
Middlesex, UK

## False promises?

Recently, our two major political parties have unveiled their election manifestoes with a view to enlisting people's support in favour of their candidates in the coming elections. The Awami League, one of the major parties, has branded its manifesto as 'Charter for Change'. It has addressed nearly all substantive issues like lowering of commodity prices, curbing of corruption, raising production of power (5000 megawatt

power by 2011), free education up to degree level, permanent pay commission, trial of war criminals, eradication of poverty and inequality and establishment of good governance. Also a bright future to the new generation has been pledged in the manifesto called 'Vision 2021'. The manifesto contains both short term and long-term programmes. On the other hand, the other major party -- Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) -- vowed to provide employment and medical facilities including health insurance and reduce prices of essentials. Over the past decades, we have seen that during election our politicians made many tall promises to the people and after their victory they forgot everything. It has become one of the salient features of our political tradition!

As these politicians did not fulfil their past election pledges, then how can we rely on their present promises? Shaila Solaiman  
Jahangirnagar University  
Campus  
Savar, Dhaka

## Words only?

Someone said, "We are a nation of words only." Now if we look at the situation ahead of the parliamentary elections, we have to admit that the statement is true. Now our veteran politicians are busy making speeches. Nevertheless, one thing has to be realized, and admitted too, that if they come to power their promises will not be fulfilled! Md. Shahed Uddin  
BBA  
IIUC

## Poor learner

There are many people in society who repent their wrong doings but some do not.

Begum Zia has learnt nothing from one-eleven. She believes heart and soul that her men did nothing wrong during her party's five-year rule. She also believes that people of this country are out to bring her back to power with overwhelming majority votes. She is expecting two-thirds majority again to become the prime minister. She complained to the people how she was confined, how her two sons were humiliated by the present caretaker government because she loved people of Bangladesh. She also told the people in

not. Locals caught him and tortured him badly.

His skull was broken, one eye is completely damaged, the other eye is going to be damaged, his ribs bones are broken.

We wanted to become engineers to serve our country!

Where is our security? Can anyone say?

Please don't remain silent.

We want an answer from the nation.

Pretom Ghosh  
Electrical & Electronics  
Engineering  
Batch 2005  
Chittagong University of  
Engineering & Technology

## Politicians

The politicians are usually those educated, honest & qualified citizens of a state who vie for the legislative seats of the senate or parliament and also for the administrative posts at the different levels of the hierarchy of the country either through the process of a general election or by the method of a revolution.

The process adopted by an evolutionary method is very often termed as democracy, when a mandate for a term is exercised through the popular adult franchise.

The politicians of our beloved country must take lessons from the past.

Golam Ashraf  
Gulshan, Dhaka

## Silk City Express

People of Rajshahi are really happy to have the Silk City Express, as they love to travel to Dhaka by train.

People are going to Dhaka for business or official work and come back on the same day by bus but that is not possible when they travel by train. The Silk City Express starts for Dhaka from Rajshahi at 7:15am and comes back from Dhaka at 3:00pm.

If the train starts for Dhaka from Rajshahi at 5:15am and comes back from Dhaka at 6:00pm, it will be more convenient for the people.

Will the railway authorities look into the matter? Mawduda Hasnin  
Rajshahi

## Uttar plots

I saw an advertisement in a daily newspaper seeking applications for allocation of 3 and 5 katha plots under Uttara phase 3.

This is obviously good news for many of us, who have been very passionately waiting to have a residential plot in Dhaka on the verge of retirement or after retirement.

But I would like to have a clarification from the Rajuk authorities and the government on the allotted plots under Uttara phase 3 circulated in the newspapers during the immediate past government, of which about 900 plots were cancelled or kept in a bance for non-compliance with the due allotment process and unsolicited interference by the then party in power. Should we be responsible for mismanagement that took place in Rajuk?

Unfortunately, I am one of the victims. I got a 3 katha plot and was very much optimistic and delighted with the feeling of having a plot to build a house after retirement. I was working as Senior National officer of the UN World Food Programme in Bangladesh.

During this period, I retired from the UN service after 30 years of work at home and abroad and I made several appeals and met senior managers of Rajuk to consider my prayer as I have no house to settle down in

Dhaka. I was only advised to be patient!

Till today, I do not understand why my allotment was cancelled for which I had submitted all required documents and being a UN staff, I could have the privilege to have a small land to live peacefully at the end of my service.

I would like to urge the government and Rajuk authorities to kindly review my case again before going for further allocation of land and kindly issue me the allotment order against my allocation no 7717, application form 14365/15213 and allow me to live peacefully in the days to come as a retired UN officer.

GKM Nasarullah  
Momotaz Mohal  
Airport Road, Jessore

## Election pledges

Our two major political party leaders are now busy with their election campaign. They are making different types of pledges. BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia said that if voted to power the four-party alliance would give subsidy on agriculture, boost food production, control food prices, generate employment for the youth and women, and make female education free up to the degree level. On the other hand, AL President Sheikh Hasina said, "If we are voted to power, we shall bring down the prices of essentials, increase power generation, make education up to degree level free, give agriculture subsidies and ensure community health care facilities." Besides, more schools and colleges will be set up, allowances for the widows and elderly people will be doubled.

But we saw in the past that the pledges were never fulfilled.

Md Belal Hossain  
MA in Arabic Literature  
University of Dhaka

## Election & hartal

We are once again going to have a national election and once again we are terrified at the prospect of incoming hartals which both the major parties are expert in using to punish the nation.

It is very sad that no party in their election manifesto mentioned their position on the issue of hartal and the possibility is there that the defeated party would call a hartal on the very next day after the election results are announced.

May I draw the attention of our two respected leaders of the Awami League and the BNP to make their positions clear on this issue.

Azam Choudhury  
Director  
President's Secretariat  
Dhaka Ahsania Mission  
Dhaka

## To President Bush...

Iraqi journalist Zeidi offered you a golden opportunity to tell the world that you possess at least some virtues. You are probably the most hated man in the world right now. What Zeidi has expressed by his act of throwing his shoes at you is the feeling of millions of people around the globe. You can realize that. The security police in Iraq can torture Zeidi; they have broken his arms and ribs, but they will not be able to break his spirit. You could have immediately stopped this, by forgiving him, by acknowledging that lot of people do hate you for the deeds you thought to be for a right cause. When a demonstrator was caught after throwing an egg at the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, the great man forgave him and suggested that he join the

British army as he possessed such a good aim at the target.

Will the hatred for you and your deeds be lessened if Zeidi is tortured or punished? You may still come forward to show some of your virtues.

Mrs. Shamim Rahman  
North Fuller Road, Dhaka

## Christmas

There we find the Virgin Mother offering the baby Jesus - the One who stripped himself of divine glory in order to become poor, driven by love for mankind.

The beautiful initiative of the nativity is meant to reawaken in all Christians the desires to witness to the values of life, love and peace of which the solemnity of Christ's birth reminds us. The tree is also a meaningful symbol of Christ's birth because, with its evergreen leaves, it recalls a life that never dies.

Commemorating the tree and the crib means passing on the history of popular piety and religiosity. It means rediscovering joy and the solidarity of friendship which we must preserve in contemporary society, where the consumerist rush and the search for material goods alone sometimes seem to prevail.

Christmas is a Christian feast and its symbols, the crib and the tree, hand down in time the true meaning of Christmas! Paul Kokoski  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

## National holidays

We have enough of national holidays along with hartals which are unwarranted national holidays for which we citizens did not bargain for in our constitution. It is good that we have got rid of innumerable national holidays which we used to enjoy in our childhood in memory of our great leaders. I do not still understand why we used to have those holidays when those great leaders worked hard for the whole of their lives to deliver us a better life.

Although I do not think economic freedom of a nation is everything, yet it is required to guarantee safeguard of other freedoms to some extent. I do not find any justification behind such long national holidays for Eids and Pujas. In Europe and America where the countries are developed and can afford to take their pace slowing down and where the Muslims form in many countries well over 10% of the population, we do not see Eids as national holidays.

Mufassil Islam  
Human Rights Advocate  
UK

## Allow FEMA to monitor elections

It is unacceptable that the Election Commission has disallowed FEMA, the most experienced organisation doing election monitoring since 1995, to monitor the

## CRP's birthday

The 30th birth anniversary of CRP was celebrated recently. To observe the day, a nice cultural programme was held. Several kinds of sporting events were organised.

The most attractive item was the basketball match. It was an inclusive game in which many persons with disability too participated. At the end of the sports, Valerie A. Taylor, the founder and coordinator of CRP, delivered a short speech. Everywhere there was a sign of joy.

In the last thirty years, the service that CRP has provided to the common people of Bangladesh cannot be described in a few words. There are some valuable organisations in the country that we are proud of. Undoubtedly, CRP is one of them. CRP is the symbol of love, dedication and devotion.

It is the only paradise for any handicapped person.

Akash Pradip  
Lecturer in English  
Bangladesh Health Professions Institute  
Savar, Dhaka



Valerie Taylor assisting a patient at CRP.

elections. People know FEMA since 1996. Thousands of citizens across the country are involved with this organisation as volunteer activists and especially during the election time as election observers. Their reports are neutral and acceptable.

What's wrong with the Commission? Why keep FEMA outside the monitoring job? Has the Election Commission something to hide? We urge the Election Commission to allow FEMA observers to do the election monitoring. This will certainly help create public confidence in the election process. Shaiful Islam  
Rajshahi

## All-pervasive corruption

A friend of mine, who has been in Bangladesh for over 20 years, training birth atten-

dants all over country in such numbers and to such a high standard that she cannot go on holiday anywhere without bumping into one of them, told me that some of them had come to her with a major problem that they faced. "Some of the families whom we help give us 50 taka, some 100 taka and some give us nothing at all, but, if we shake our heads and say that there are such complications that they must go to the clinic, the clinic gives us 500 taka! Sister, what do we do? We have families to bring up."

Once again, corruption stands between every attempt to help this dear country and its effectiveness - corruption practised by those in positions of responsibility, including upper class professionals whose 'education' has not included any moral education that has had any effect at all. Angela Robinson  
Gulshan, Dhaka

## Architect Mazharul Islam

Yesterday was your Happy 85th. We, Rafique, Tanna and Dalia, your children, as well as Nazia, are so proud of you. We are proud because you have given us a great life, more than we could ask for. We are proud of you, because you have taught us the best things in life. You have always wanted us to be Honest, Compassionate, Selfless, Truthful and most importantly, Conscious, both socially and politically.

We feel proud when we look at your creations like the (then) Public Library, the Art College and the NIPA building in the University area; as well as the National Archive in Agargaon.

Even when we step out of the city, we can see your beautiful complex, of the Jahangir Nagar University, in Savar.

There is no doubt that the city of Chittagong is also proud to have a whole University Complex to their credit.

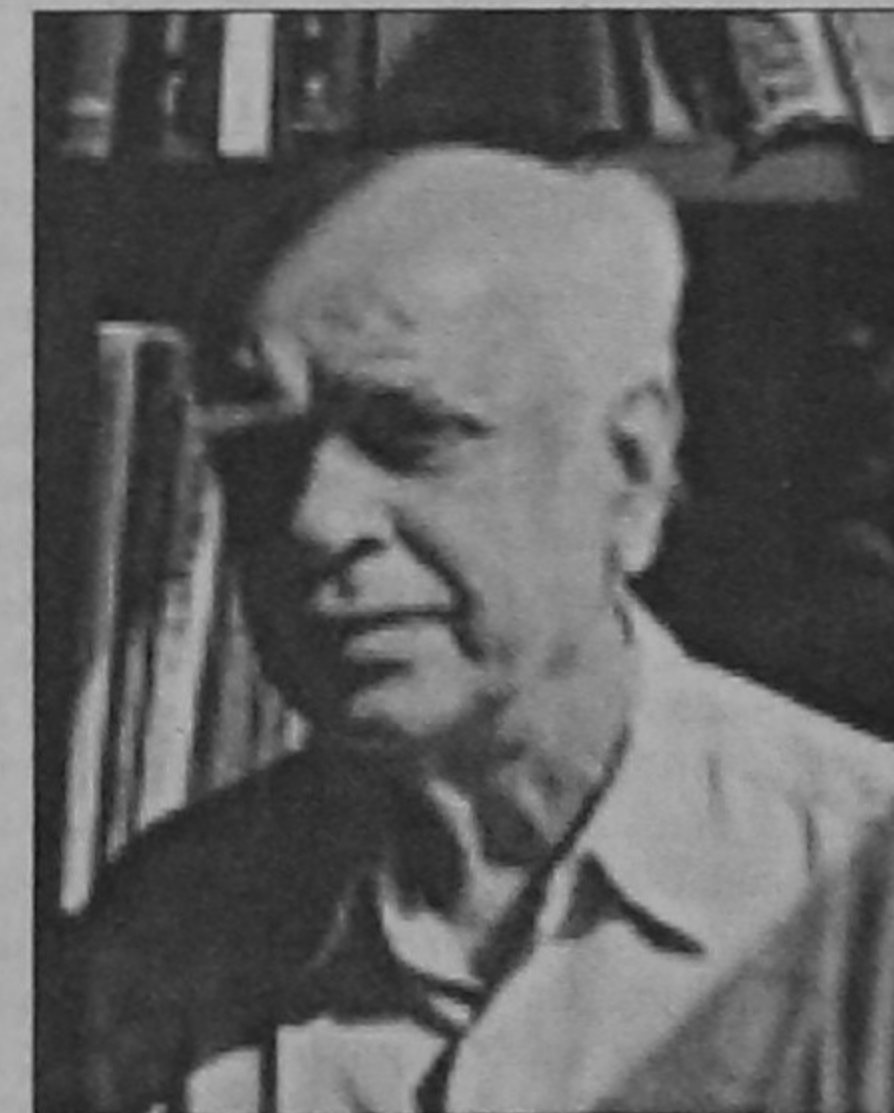
We, as your children, remember, how you would come back home from work and make us laugh with your jokes. We would be astonished to hear you yelling at someone who discredited our country. We especially enjoyed the new words that you invented when you wanted to express something, as well as the hilarious verses you created.

You and Amma always welcomed any guest at anytime of the day and there was always enough food to provide for them.

Funnily enough, you were the softer of the two, whereas, Amma would make us adhere to the rules of the house. But no doubt, you liked the discipline at home.

The days of our lives have passed ever so swiftly and we have all reached our prime. And Abba, you have become so detached with life.

Remember, when we would joke and state that you look so much like our



National Poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam. You would instantly respond, that, He gave you 'Ha te khor' when you were 2 years old and so he was your idol and mentor.

But, Abba, is this why you have become so silent and aloof? Is this why you don't want to participate in any activities relating to your profession and politics?

It is really heart-rending and overwhelming to see you like this.

Your grand-children, Ramit, Tanuja, Silma, Diran, Tusheet and Ayaan, all want to see you in your previous form. You are a source of inspiration and resourcefulness for them.

We all, including Nazia, Rahi and Azad, pray that you maintain your present health condition and be with us for many more years to come!!!

We believe you had a great 85th birthday, Dear Abba, on the 25th of December and remember we all love you more than anything in this world!!! Dalia Nausheen  
Chicago, Illinois

## Adulteration of foods



Mixing impure substances with foods was a much-talked-about topic in the recent past. It again has gained momentum with the latest reports on the new techniques of food adulteration. A few months ago the nature of this malpractice changed radically as the anti-adulteration drive was going on in full swing. Interestingly enough, the situation is now as it was in the past.

What really has astonished me was the news of mixing up of formalin with milk, urea with muri or puffed rice (a locally made food item) and carbide with different kinds of fruits. Moreover, the use of colour with different types of food is very rampant. Reports

showed us how the fish traders are using poisonous formalin with fish to keep it fresh. It can be noted here that formalin being a toxic chemical material can easily enter the human cells and cause permanent damage to our body. Each of the aforementioned chemicals can contribute much to cause various deadly diseases like cancer. This is no better than slow poisoning!

These ill motivated practices simply raise the question as to what actually we are eating. Are the traders feeding us these toxic chemicals as bonus? As citizens of the country we have the legitimate right to safe food. So why should we fall prey to the

deceitful activities committed by some unscrupulous people? The reason behind the sudden slow down of the government's strong drive to curb this crime is mysterious.

In no way can these activities be allowed to go on. The government must monitor the situation and ensure the people's right to pure food. Exemplary punishment to the offenders must be given so that they dare not do this again. Mass awareness about the bad effects of contamination of food can play a vital role in this regard.

Sarwar Hussain  
Dept. of CSE  
University of Chittagong