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### Honest candidates

If we open the TV channels and look at the newspapers, a group of people are tirelessly pleading for honest candidates. Who are they? What is their qualification to be a good MP? Please suggest 10 names and put them to transparent media scrutiny. Also we find a funny political strategy to promote the concept of "No" vote. Today we heard that more than 200 thousand local and foreign observers would observe the election. The political speeches of the two major political parties are full of promises, allegations and apprehensions of vote rigging. The political drama called "terrorism" is in full play around the security of major political leaders. The political spokesperson of the government is looking for a "transition" phase of handing over power to the elected government. The CA says it would be automatic; but none of these important persons have told the secret of their message. Let us guess what it could be, again a big dose of uncertainty?

How can we evaluate the above scenario? We have been quite pessimistic about the election because of erratic behaviour of the CTG and funny acts of the EC. They have always chosen to put the cart before the horse to delay the normal but important election preparatory process.

It is really disgraceful to think that 200 thousand local and foreign observers will observe the quality of election and give certificate as they have seen or perceived during observation. We would have been glad if they could avoid coming to observe our election. They are a factor and partners of our national digress. I only hope that the so called "gold standard" voter list would not spoil the election. The observers might

find it difficult to follow the issue.

I am sitting thousands of miles away and watching the events in the media. It is learnt that forecasting of election results have started coming in the media depending on the choice of the party by the media that has engaged the result forecasting firms. Opinion poll is the major tool for such a forecast. However, as an individual I have a forecast of results based on common sense. These are:

a. The Awami League and the Moha Jote.....130 to 135 seats.  
b. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jote.....135-140.  
c. Independent.....15 to 20.

I have calculated all 300 seat. Due to lack of sufficient local knowledge and about the candidates, I would not forecast the results of women candidates except two who are sure to win. I am not a supporter of the Jamaat or the BNP, but an objective critic of the AL. They are missing both depth and substance in their campaign plan. The BNP and the Jamaat, having strong blessings of the government makers at home and abroad, will run the show. I am reluctant to put the BNP in the driving seat of the next government. The most unfortunate outcome would be the war criminals being rehabilitated by the present cleaning process of the past acts and deeds.

So, the Jamaat is the big winner?  
A reader  
One-mail

### Zircon in election manifesto!

Zircon is unknown to most people in the country. Recently the name of Zircon along with other several minerals has come to the priority list of the election manifesto of one of the political parties. We know that natural gas is

our national mineral resource but there are other costly minerals in the country that need to be explored. Those minerals are available in the coastal regions, nearby islands and in the sands of the rivers in northern region of Bangladesh. They are solid minerals known as Zircon, Rutile, Monazite, Garnet, Ilmenite, Magnetite etc. Depending on their Purity and Rarity, they are worth billions of dollars and it is a case of transformation of scientific discovery into a billion dollar industry.

Realizing the importance of the minerals, Australian Titanium Resources made an agreement in 2001 with the government of Bangladesh to use 14,700 hectares of land in the coastal region for exploration of 15 different kinds of mineral resources. Later on, the Australian Premier Mineral was awarded two licenses for exploration of heavy mineral beach sands in Cox's Bazar and in nearby islands. The contracts are renewable and transferable to any other company.

In 1961, the then Pakistan Geological Survey in cooperation of the US Geological Survey first detected the Radioactive Element Monazite (Thorium) in the coastal region of Cox's Bazar. Based on the discovery, the Atomic Energy Commission of then Pakistan started geological survey and identified 17 placer deposits of various sizes and quantities of the above mentioned minerals.

In 1975, the Australian govt. set up a pilot plant in Cox's Bazar, since then the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) is using the plant as part of their research and development (R & D) activities. They could not make the elements (Zircon, Ilmenite, Rutile, Garnet) viable due to lack of efficiency.

I came to know from my US colleagues about the exist-

ence of radio active and valuable minerals in Bangladesh in the middle of the 80s while working with the US Geological Survey in the Middle East. As a Geophysicist, I should mention that minerals exploration is a risky business but it brings money as well as prestige for a nation. Those minerals are available to only a few countries that are considered lucky. According to theory of economic geologists, if a nation possesses at least one of the minerals and can utilize properly, that nation or country no more remains poor. We have several valuable compounds (minerals) and they are very easily available. We have immense opportunities to develop our country through exploration of the existing minerals.

It is good news for the nation that our political leaders have started realizing the importance of their national resources, including mineral resources. We expect that their commitment in the election manifesto for exploration of the mineral resources like Zircon, Ilmenite, Rutile and Garnet will be 100% materialized even if they are in opposition. They must push the party in power to make it a success.

We will be waiting for the good days.  
Prof. Lutfor Rahman  
Founder Vice-Chancellor  
Science and Technology  
University in Rural  
Bangladesh

### Dropping oil prices

As the world braces for a recession whose depth and duration is anybody's guess, one silver lining of the downturn is already clear: the crisis at the gas station is over. In an economy now facing nothing but headwinds, declining oil prices may be about the only thing putting money directly back in consumers' pockets.

The bad news is the reason for the price cut: the global economy is headed for a serious slump, which is already slashing demand for oil. Consumers all over the world had already begun cutting back on their consumption in response to the upward price shock. Now economic growth is slowing everywhere.

The export sectors, especially the garments sector will face adverse consequences arising from the world financial crisis. From the on-going decline in consumption expenditures in the industrial countries, apparel demand will decline. Therefore, job market may get squeezed for the Bangladeshi non-skilled and medium-skilled workers.

The vulnerability in the country's current account will also depend on the inward flow of remittances. The lion's share of its remittances comes from the Middle East, followed by the United States. It is expected that the flows of remittances from the United States and other European countries will slow down.

The country's manpower export may face setback, as recruiters fear a cut in demand for Bangladesh's cheap labour due to the looming threat of a prolonged global recession.

As the major export competitor countries of Bangladesh experience a sharp drop in the value of their currencies, a significant appreciation in the Bangladesh taka may erode the country's competitiveness to some extent.

Although the economy of Bangladesh has shown significant resilience to the global economic crisis until now, it would really be interesting to see how long it can stop itself from being affected.

Yasir Md. Farabi  
Student  
North South University  
Dhaka

### "No" vote

After a long wait a much coveted general election is being held today. In the aftermath of the drive of the ACC against the corrupt politicians and businessmen, the nation was ready for reforms. But people saw an appalling picture of reform in the political arena.

There is a big loophole in this system-- "NO" vote will be meaningful only when it exceeds a number.

Md. Khayrul Alam Ababeel  
Executive - ICT Division  
Syhnet Office, Dhaka Stock  
Exchange Ltd.  
Chowhatta  
Syhnet

# Flowery promises



RAJ ANIKAT / DRINKNEWS



SHAFIQUL ISLAM / DRINKNEWS

Our politics is on shaky grounds, with the major political parties playing mind games with the general people. The flowery and poetic promises are just a fake mask that they have put on their faces. However, I must praise their power of

persuading the public in their favour just before election.

The present political condition of our country can be compared with a glass full of water maintaining stability with its surface tension and any extra drop on it will sim-

ply wobble all of the water in it. I urge the nominated candidates to lead the masses with lot of care and passion and avoid all sorts of hot-blooded attitude toward their opponents. The winners as well as the losers of the election should placate

their supporters and the leaders should not use any baleful languages, so that we have a smooth handover of power to a democratic government.

Zahid A. Choudhury  
Dhaka Cantonment  
Dhaka

### Corruption

In every socio-economic field of our country corruption has spread out as an epidemic which is severely hindering the development of the country.

Corruption includes abuse of authority, bribery, favouritism, extortion, fraud, patronage, theft, deceit, illegality and so on.

Eradication of corruption is a crying need for the greater interest of our country. To make the country free from corruption we can take the following steps.

- Citizens of all classes should be responsible, accountable, dutiful and considerate.

- Nepotism, favouritism, red-tapism etcetera should be dealt with an iron hand.

- Take steps to reform the administrative structure with liability and transparency.  
Habibur Rashid Ismail  
Chittagong

### Voters' obligation

The Jatiya Sangsad (JS) election is a great opportunity for the electorate to vote out those politicians who have made false promises during election campaigns. In the past, these politicians patronised militancy and fundamentalist forces as well. This election brings a golden opportunity for the people to reject corrupt political bigwigs who have turned Bangladesh into one of the most corrupt nations in the world. For a better and prosperous Bangladesh people should vote against them.

As a voter it is our sacred political right and moral obligation to prevent dishonest, controversial candidates from coming to power again and save the nation from any kind of future political turmoil.  
Shailla Solaiman  
Jahangirnagar University  
Campus  
Savar, Dhaka

### To our leaders...

Election is the name of a great responsibility. A political leader starts his journey with the promise to help the common people. But when people elect them, they never fulfil the promises they made earlier. The dream of common people never comes true. The ACC is an institution which is working to remove corruption.

It is impossible for the ACC alone to eliminate the root of corruption. But if our leaders are determined, corruption can be removed from the root.

Our leaders should try to fulfil the promises they made before the election for the betterment of the country.

Tamanna Ferdous Munni  
English Language & Literature  
IUC

### Manifestos of AL and BNP

Lately, the Awami League and the BNP announced their election manifestos with their political panache to woo the voters. Though the publication of manifesto is a political rite for the political parties before the national election, it has significance in our national life.

I have perused the manifestos of the AL and the BNP exhaustively and became galvanized to give my feedback on them. To me, the manifesto of the BNP is very lacklustre and platitudinous. This party failed to show us any light, as it lacks vision. Rather it is full of personal opportunistic views. Its target areas are micro levels.

The BNP has formulated its manifesto readily and has not specified mechanisms to materialize its plans. I think the BNP wants to plug in the loopholes that aborted its plan to cling to power for good. But the manifesto of the AL is very forward looking and target-oriented. It has specific timeframes to implement its development plans.

The promises of the AL are very pragmatic, result-oriented and efficacious for the sustainable development of the country.  
Molla Mohammad Shaheen  
Shahbagh, Dhaka

## Level playing field?



NOOR ALAM / DRINKNEWS

What does a level playing field mean? Does it mean to equate everybody irrespective of their virtues or vices, depending on the respective situation, add, or subtract virtues or vices as the case may be? Our learned discussants in numerous TV talk shows seem to believe just that in case of our leading political parties.

The immediate past democratically (?) elected government in its last term has beaten everybody by far in excelling in corruption. It has been able to corrupt every institution of the country including the judiciary. Every charge labelled against it has proven true by admission of its own party members. Looting, plundering, land grabbing, murder, repression, oppression, nepotism, favouritism, vandalism, syndication-- everything, but whenever corruption unlimited is mentioned both the major parties are mentioned as if they are equally responsible for sins unlimited. Almost all the major political parties are tainted by corruption but the degree varies greatly. Without any consideration to the extent of corruption, mentioning all in the same category giving a perception of equality in corruption is a gross injustice. Injustice is a corruption too. Thus, when the seemingly upright speakers in our media with an air of neutrality label charges of corruption on both the major parties without any mention of degrees is a blatant transgression of truthfulness. In doing so they are only diminishing the hugeness of sins of the immediate past democratic government, that is, if not greater an equal offence.

The immediate past democratic government (IPG) used a very ingenious ploy. It has been able to diminish its sins largely by forcing the other major party into its fold, helped by the present non-party government's super neutrality. The CTG in its quest to prove neutral has pursued members of both the major parties with equal zest and labelled charges of corruption without any consideration of extent or degree. This is sheer violation of all moral and

legal ethics. This could have been justified if these leaders were tried in courts of law in accordance with the merit of the cases. And if trials were perceived fair then none would have benefited unduly as is the case now. Time and non-conviction have greatly served the cause of the immediate past democratic government.

Thus, our discussants are easily guilty of misrepresenting the truth giving a huge benefit to the perpetrators, in this case the immediate past democratic government. They are doing it knowingly or ignorantly, time will prove that but in both the cases, they are equally guilty. They simply are pretentious. Just yesterday, a pretender of sagacity and learnedness in an unguarded moment veering from his neutrality suddenly charged a leader of promising the impossible such as giving free fertilizers, if elected. However, he chose to say nothing specific about the other party. That very statement sounded as if the party insinuated is the only party making untenable promises. The implication is far more serious and far-reaching. It clearly says that the party in question is undependable, irresponsible and untruthful. IPG's corruption, howsoever grave, is greatly dwarfed by the neutral remarks of the discussants. Unfortunately, the charges of corruption have already lost its punch by the ingenious equation discussed earlier.

I heard another very astute debater saying in a breath that there are no identified war criminals, since nobody has been so judged by the courts, and his party will sure try the war criminals if identified criminals are found! What a twisting of tongue! These pretenders of neutrality and justice are greatly damaging the cause of justice. They are responsible for perpetuation of corruption in society by subtly trying to cleanse the guilty.

Mir Mahboob Ali  
Former Senior Executive  
The Bangladesh Observer  
Dhaka



AMADUL HUQ / DRINKNEWS

## Trial of war criminals

The alleged war criminals are in safe hands to get at least 30 JS seats. The Bangladesh National Party in return will get full support of the Jamaat in their ground level election work and might get a reasonable number of seats to form government in collaboration with the Jamaat and other like minded parties. Apparently, the chances of the AL are gradually getting out of their hands.

President Ershad is not dependable as an ally. He might win in Rangpur but his popularity in other areas is not as high as in Rangpur and possibly in Sylhet. On the top of it, the AL chief is under Huji threat as reported by Indian media. We do not know how much creditable the threat is, but this might push Hasina into defence.

It is also very interesting to listen to the CTG and the EC on the issue of

security. In fact they are also spreading fear and unconfirmed rumours of threat. It is getting clear and confirmed by recurrent threat of terrorism that this is a very effective political weapon to manage politics of any particular country. I think the time is up to discuss this issue seriously and find out a way out to handle this political hoax. In this world there are things which are beyond the scope of material proof, you will have to believe it and accept the reality.

Now coming back to the main issue of trial of war criminals. I am fully convinced that as long as the BNP is in power and their mentors continue to provide full support to the war criminals, we can just forget the issue of their trial.

A reader  
One-mail