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Genocide in Palestine



You have been giving us news for long of massacre of our brethren in Palestine, whose lives were never safe, (but) tell me what could we do, when the rest of the world remains a powerless observer!

While I have congratulated our incoming leaders in the government, I have a plea to make, to do something to save from annihilation the population of Palestine. Every other power talks of peace in the Middle East, but did they do anything (really) to stop the murder of the Palestinians. 'Yes' there has been widespread revulsion about this massacre and a sense of helplessness from people around the world, unable to do anything about it!

As the Muslims of Britain have been actively doing, collecting funds and medical aid, our new govt. can do the same in a bigger way.

AF Rahman
One-mail

Change, the key to success

Change is one of the most critical aspects of effective management or governance. There has never been an age in which change has not taken place. The demographic profile of a country is changing. So the country looking forward for development must adjust itself with the changing environment. Every individual, organization and country has the responsibility to change themselves or help in changing people, if it is positive! The recent endeavour of Prothom Alo as an organisation to encourage people to change is worth mentioning. Especially the oaths sworn by different group of people given in Radio Foort or FM are really promising. It will definitely have a positive impact if people have the intention to change. Besides the oaths are easily understandable especially to the people who are illiterate and are turned to radio for entertainment but unfortunately it will be difficult for the illiterate people to understand the slogan as they can not read the slogan given in the advertisement "Bodle jao bodle dao" (change yourself and change others) which was widely displayed all around Dhaka city and other places. Anybody who doesn't know how to read will think that this should be the system, like men should sit and women should stand, or interpret it in their own way. I, out of curiosity asked my helping hand (maid) what she understands from the picture as she cannot read. She just explained that the guys sitting are feeling irritated by the woman as she is standing in front of them! As she is not able to read she understood it in her own way. I always think that the posters should always be developed keeping the illiterate people or general people in mind.

The pictures given in the posters would have been much more understandable if they matched with the slogan, for example as the slogan says change yourselves and change others the picture would have been like women sitting beside men and men standing. Or more activity based like men asking woman to sit by showing their own sit. This will not only make the illiterate people like rickshaw pullers, labourers, garment workers and others to understand the message easily but at the same time will make the endeavour of Prothom Alo an effective one. The other posters like a small boy pushing the rickshaw (which is a common picture) should be like, somebody from the passenger helping the rickshaw puller. I believe people will change if only we can make them understand the benefit of change in a positive way and through changing ourselves first.

Romina Dewan Kabir
Executive Director
TRK Consultancy Services

Gulshan-Banani Bridge

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever." But the Gulshan-Banani Bridge, the so-called concrete 'beauty' has become a beast for the residents of Gulshan, particularly for my family and I who are the worst victims.

With no police vigil and traffic laws enforced, the area turns into almost a 'free for all' crime zone as the evening spreads over the adjacent murky lake. Besides, horrendous honks of vehicular traffic and blaring music from the rushing and the parked cars is driving the residents, my family members and I, in particular, mad and sick.

With nightfall, scores of cars and motorcycles are parked along the kerb, blocking the longer right lane of the 'Y' loop of the road forcing the speeding vehicles to honk even louder with their hydraulic horns. In addition, people

who disembark from their cars and motorcycles keep leaning against the long stretch of the railing, opposite to my flat, until the late hours of the night, smoking cigarettes and cannabis and drinking tea and whistling to passing prostitutes and girls besides trading verbal abuses. The crowd, mostly consisting of young people, even take recourse to dancing with their female counterparts amid loud music wafting from their car stereos, forcing the elderly residents like my wife and I to sit out the night cursing ourselves for being the country's ordinary and powerless citizen. We are the regular tax payers, though.

At times, we are forced to engage ourselves in verbal duels with this rowdy boisterous crowd which stay stationary right in front of my dining space window for hours together, resorting to such sort of nuisance.

According to a report of The Daily Star, the bridge over Gulshan-Banani Lake to link Banani and Gulshan residential areas has been built without proper transport planning and public consultation on traffic impact analysis.

The newspaper quoting transport experts said that the bridge was not identified as a possible link between Banani and Gulshan in the Strategic Transport Plan (STP) of Dhaka.

The Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (LGRD) initially undertook a 90-metre long bridge project to connect 60-foot wide commercial road no-11 in Banani with 40-foot wide residential road no-41 in Gulshan. Local Government Engineering Division of the LGRD is implementing the project.

Later, they revised the project proposal and made it a Y-shaped bridge connecting Gulshan road no-35/A too, which is a dead end.

The Tk 12.47 crore project (initially) was undertaken without obtaining prior environmental clearance and impact assessment.

Environment Conservation Rules (ECR), 1997 require the project authorities to carry out a prior Viability Assessment Report, an Initial Environment Examination and an Environmental Management Plan for any project.

The project has been expeditiously implemented in unusual hurry in the face of special interest of an adviser to the caretaker government, the newspaper added referring to a source.

Haronuzzaman
Avictim

Congratulations!

My heartfelt congratulations to the grand alliance for achieving an unprecedented win in the recently held general election. But they should not forget the people and party workers who gave their lives over the past 7 years just to bring this change and to bring the country back to the path of democracy. Especially, we should not forget Ivy Rahman who lost her life under most tragic circumstances.

Now it is up to the grand alliance to make people's dream come true by trying the war criminals, bringing the price of the essentials within the reach of people and by eradicating corruption.

Anwara Hasib (Laly)
Asad Avenue
Mohammedpur
Dhaka

Be discreet, please

Recently, our newly appointed home minister told that the post-election clashes were the results of internal conflicts in the BNP. She might be right. But holding a highly responsible position she should refrain from blaming others.

If you say things like this without any prior investigation, lower level workers of your party will be encouraged to engage in violent activities.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Shahjalal University
Sylhet

Mistakes, again

I am very sorry to see that Sheikh Hasina is again making some mistakes from the very beginning. The first priority should be to give autonomy to all media outlets including TV channels which are run by taxpayers' money but fail to talk about the real problems of Bangladesh. Sheikh Hasina had made the same mistake in 1996. Which party doesn't want poverty alleviation? So please stop non-specific distraction because people are conscious and today or tomorrow you have to pay for this intentional "mistakes".

Problems should be debated openly on TV. And these free TV channels will prevent undemocratic witch hunting.

Dr. Azizul Karim
GP, Australia

Bold decision!

Recently, the Awami League President Sheikh Hasina has been sworn in as the new prime minister. Thirty-one others have been inducted into her council of ministers. We have seen that the cabinet comprises 23 ministers and eight state ministers. Of them, only AMA Muhith, Matia Chowdhury, AK Khandaker, Syed Ashraf Islam, Syed Abul Hossain and Dipankar Talukder have previous experience. Three came on technocrat quota. Many senior leaders including presidium members Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Irfan Ahmed, Abdul Jallil, Suranjit Sengupta, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Sabei Hossain Chowdhury, and Asaduzzaman Noor were left out. Workers Party President Menon and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Inu were not also included though they were widely expected to be ministers.

Most of the people consider it a very bold and challenging decision by the new prime minister. Most of the cabinet members are not well experienced to run the administration. But a new era has been started with the appointment of this cabinet. We wish the new ministers a grand success.

Areader
Sylhet

Where is the UN?

We often hear much about human rights from the UN. But when it comes to a Muslim country, the UN remains quite silent. If we look back to the last few days, we can see that more than 900 hundred people have been killed and scores of civilians were wounded in Israeli military operations. Even the injured people are being barred from getting medical treatment. What is more, a mosque in the northern part of Palestine has been hit. Thus Israel continues its blatant violation of human rights.

What is the UN doing?
S.M. Rumun
Naya Bazar
West Nasirabad
Pahartali, Chittagong

MPs and duty free cars

Congratulations to the newly elected MPs. There will be a total of three hundred and 45 MPs, including the selected women MPs. Now if each MP avails the tax free car facility for Tk. 2 crore BMW then with the 200% duty waiver the total amount will be Tk. 1,380 crore. Moreover, many of the cars will be used by unnamed friends and business partners of the MPs.

So, I would urge the newly elected government to reasonably limit the duty free amount for cars to be used by MPs.
A Citizen
One-mail

Prime task

I must congratulate the grand alliance for having secured the historic victory. But they should not be overwhelmed by this victory. They should bear in mind that people have elected them with a dream of better life, corruption free good governance and trial of war criminals. However, the prime task of the government must be controlling the prices of essentials. And I believe, the newly formed government will have every scope to control the prices. I believe this from my past experience in the AL tenure after the 1996 election. Nowadays, the prices of crude oil as well as edible oil in the international market have fallen significantly. But we find little reflection of this in our local market. Bus fares had increased sharply with price hike of crude oil in the international market. But after the price fall, we hoped the bus fares would be reduced but nothing happened. The newly formed government can bring about the desired change in this regard by rescheduling the bus fares.

At this moment, we are getting some reports from various places that AL supporters are harassing the opposition party men. This culture should be abandoned, once and for all.

I would request the electronic and print media to collect news from every corner of the country. And I would request the honourable prime minister to consider these reports and she should instruct all the elected members to advise their followers to avoid such violence.

Md. Mahfujur Rahman Firoz
Mirpur, Dhaka

Thanks to EC, CTG

As the New Year began and a new government took office, I felt I must write a note of thanks to the outgoing caretaker government and the Election Commission for managing the most peaceful, decent, disciplined and efficient national vote ever experienced in this country.

I congratulate them for a congenial and harmonious election, and also for the exceptional and exemplary national ID cards and voter roll project they have bequeathed. I must add that Tony Blair as prime minister had wanted to introduce national ID cards in the UK by 2008, but failed to manage it! We managed it for a population double the size in record time and almost flawlessly, which would have been impossible at any time in the past in this country.

The smoothness of the whole operation was another surprise. A well-trained, well-mannered and extremely helpful volunteer, in itself a past rarity, came to my home for me to fill out the initial form. He gave me a date to go to a nearby school where they took my fingerprints, digital photo and gave me a second date to collect my ID, which I received at the appointed time with no hassle. I must add that my name, Ahmad, was spelt correctly whereas even my bank account here (with a foreign-run bank) spells it wrongly with an 'e'.

On each of the above occasions I didn't have to spend more than 15 or 20 minutes to complete the required process.

On the voting day I went and stood in line around lunchtime for some 10 minutes, though queues were much longer in the morning. In the polling booth I was amazed to see my particulars typewritten with a copy of my photo and signature. This really was a novel experience. I was given a seal to mark my ballot paper, went behind the curtain, cast my vote and came out without any fuss.



HABIBUR RAHMAN / DRINKNEWS

People's power

The result of the just concluded general election is a puzzle for both the winners and losers. The unprecedented victory of the 14-party alliance came through a humiliating defeat of the 4-party alliance. Despite Begum Khaleda Zia's complaint of election engineering, this poll with about 80% turnout has widely been accepted as free and fair, and will remain as a model not only for Bangladesh but also for many nations of the world. People with new voter ID exercised their power.

The questions are: Why did people make this history? Why did 4-party alliance suddenly fall from "sublime" to "ridiculous"? Why and how did the 14-party alliance get such a massive victory, which was even beyond their imagination? The simple answer is: it's a reflection of people's power.

Critical analysis shows that people did not vote for the 14-party alliance; they voted against massive corruption and mismanagement of the BNP-led government. People were suffocated with sky-high prices of daily necessities, massive corruption, and unacceptable mismanagement. The grievances against 4-party alliance mounted and finally reached the peak. Poverty-ridden farmers failed to get fertilisers even though they were ready to pay the high prices. BNP cadres in this critical juncture took opportunities to become rich. Poor farmers were not only deprived, but also cheated and humiliated. Crisis of electricity added another fuel to their grievances. The BNP-led alliance grossly failed to address these basic problems of people. People were thus waiting to punish the 4-party alliance.

The right moment was grabbed by the Awami League-led alliance. Sheikh

Hasina promised to the nation that she would reduce the price of rice to 10 taka per Kg, give free fertilisers to the farmers, and provide at least one employment in every family. One might have serious doubt whether these promises can actually be met in a country like Bangladesh; but he/she cannot dispute that these promises captured the imagination of millions of people. Therefore, this election was less about the fight for idealism (secularism vs. nationalism) but more about the question of survival, basic necessities, and punishing the corrupt folks.

Despite having many notable achievements of the BNP-led government, they failed to focus on those due to the massive crackdown by the CTG. During the time of election, the BNP as a party was massively disorganised and was not ready at all to face the election. Most of its leaders were in jail, and the onus of campaign was largely shouldered by Begum Khaleda Zia herself. She tried her best, but the overall climate was not in her favour. The news of her two sons' massive corruption just a few days before the election dealt another massive blow to her campaign. The 14-party alliance got momentum, and with the help of the media they used it massively and perfectly.

For the BNP and its alliance, the time has come to do self-assessment as to why this powerful alliance is what it is today. The 14-party alliance, for its part, should be proud of its achievement, but should not be arrogant.

Dr. M. Saidul Islam
Visiting Assistant Professor (Sociology)
The College of William
and Mary (University)
Virginia, USA

It was a historical first for a government-run procedure in all my past experience. And the fact that any of this is worth mentioning says a lot about our past administrations.

My two past voting experiences, needless to say, were quite different. Quite apart from the violence and tensions during past campaigning and election days, the first time I went to vote on arriving at my local polling station, I found my name was not there as it should have been, the second time I arrived to find my vote had already been cast!

What is also worth mentioning this time around is the experience of the past few days, since Election Day and Awami League's landslide win. The peace and calm have lasted, with no zealous gloating, no huge victory rallies or unruliness, no excesses. Nor have the losers held the usual violent demos or caused trouble (so far) - also worth remarking.

One thing has not changed: the losing party's usual allegations of 'vote rigging'. Just one brief comment here: does the BNP really expect anyone to believe that every election official in the country, every returning officer and polling official, every local and foreign observer, every member of the media and even BNP's own party representatives all present during the vote

counts were somehow involved in the so-called 'staging of results'?

No. It appears even the BNP's allies and supporters understand the reasons for the four-party's debacle, given their muted response so far to the defeat.

What we can hope is the entire roadmap, process and management of the just-concluded election will be a lesson in administration from the outgoing governing authorities to the future government/s.

Let's see where we are as this New Year begins. Thanks again to the Election Commission and the caretaker government for a truly free, fair and credible election.

Rashiduddin Ahmad
Eskaton Garden Road
Dhaka

Hasina's call to opposition

I am not directly or indirectly related to any political parties but I maintain tacit support to a party over 20 years that sometimes gives some insights for my personal development in fulfilment of some social, moral political obligations.

I am personally so fascinated and delighted with the sensible call of Sheikh Hasina in her press conference, after winning the election, in China Bangladesh Friendship Hall, towards the opposition

political parties to work together in building the country, by forgetting all those past events. We must agree that the country is the most important matter to all and not party politics and we should make the best possible endeavours to uphold the image of the country.

Both the Awami League and the BNP leaders have proven experience to run the country and both of them are well conversant with our social, economic problems. Hence if these two leaders work in tandem to build a new country for the millions of people who voted for the change, it will be a tremendous breakthrough.

The landslide victory of the Awami League is a unique opportunity for them to take the lead role in making parliament functional, lively and participatory.

In the last 37 years of independence, we have failed to reach our desired goals. Now our economy is moving forward, especially in the sectors like garments, remittances from overseas employments, infrastructure development, agricultural production, educational management etc.

What we need now is a good people-oriented government following the democratic principles.
Nasarullah
One-mail

Winter



When the winter becomes severe, the destitute people lead their lives in poor condition. We see, especially in Dhaka, that at least 3.5 lakh people have no habitats.

The issue deserves a closer look.
Md. Sahidur Rahman
Zahurul Haque Hall
University of Dhaka

Political culture

We are the people of Bangladesh. We know how we achieved our independence in 1971. From the very beginning, we were cherishing the hope that our country would be a prosperous one, but still now we are not capable of translating our dream into reality. After passing a crucial period, we can see a new sun in a new horizon. New and the next generations want to get a new Bangladesh where corruption, violence etc will

be absent.
I would request the prime minister, the leader of the opposition and the political parties to create and develop a new political culture for the betterment of Bangladesh. As we know, all kinds of developments depend on a credible and stable political culture.
Zahidur Rahman
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Journalism, RU

