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Chittagong election



JASHIM SALAMI / DRINKNEWS

The city election of Chittagong was held by and large peacefully. I find the efforts of the EC to deliver a free and fair poll have been appreciated. There was also the contrary view and criticism that the EC has robbed this democratic exercise of franchise with the citizens' committee, stripping the festival of democracy of its vibrancy. Does the Commission deserve this reprobation? I am afraid not. So a stringent law is enacted perhaps with full knowledge that like others this would fall by the wayside at the time of implementation. This syndrome is aptly called the 'culture of impunity.' No wonder, there is consternation, a cry of anguish, and an accusation of throttling of democracy, as the stringency of the law hits home only when the EC asks for and monitors its implementation without exception!

Has the strict implementation reduced the cost of contesting an election? To those parties it may surprise many to be told that there are still some in our country who believe in not violating the law relating to the ceiling on expenditure, the steps taken by the EC are welcome. For those parties and candidates who do not have the money power to undertake a campaign that can match their opponents poster-to-poster, banner-to-banner, vehicle-to-vehicle and meeting-to-meeting, the strict implementation is welcome.

Big spending in elections by parties and candidates is a manifestation of the

festering disease of corruption and concealment of income leading to the generation of black money. If a candidate is willing to spend ten times more than the prescribed ceiling, it is not out of philanthropy but in the secure knowledge that he can earn ten times what he spends once he gets to the seat of power. Nothing can be more naïve than the thinking that the ban on flags and bunting has pushed up the expenditure levels higher. It can be nobody's case that in the days of yore, of flags and bunting, the limit on election expenditure was not crossed. The only difference now is that the number of people who have 'earned' huge piles of cash has gone up considerably, thanks to the real estate boom, the mining boom, and whatever other booms we have had, and that money has raised the bar for the spending and made the envelopes pushed under the door fatter and fatter. If it was muscle power that was employed in the commercial capital, it is money power now in the richer regions.

If however there is concern over the danger posed by the growing power of money in politics and in elections, if we do not want our democracy to be hijacked by the demon of unaccounted wealth earned in unscrupulous ways and spent to grab the levers of power, let us sit up and take notice before it is too late.

Gopal Sengupta
Canada

To my father...

You told me how to live and let me watch how you live. I always try to follow your footsteps and so that I can be like you. And I believe I will neither be disappointed nor be discouraged, rather I will acquire a great deal.

I am glad that I have you to guide me to the right way to success and virtue. You never gave me the smallest hint about how hard you work and take care of the most whimsical of my demands. Together with Ammu, you have done more than enough for your only child. And I cannot express how much you mean to me, how much I admire you, how much I appreciate you and want to thank you for everything and how much I love you, through this little write-up. It is like I have so much to tell you, yet I am speechless.

Zareen Tasnim Khaled
Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka

Death of a newspaper

The country's oldest English newspaper - "The Bangladesh Observer" died after prolonged legal and financial illness on June 08, 2010 following shutting down of its operation by the owners. It was 60. Starting its publication as "The Pakistan Observer" in 1949, the prestigious daily broadsheet encountered so many problems including ban on publication. The Bangladesh Observer left behind numerous reputed journalists (whom it brought up), ardent readers and subscribers, writers and admirers to mourn its death. They expressed profound shock and sympathy at the sad demise of the well-circulated newspaper. They prayed for the re-birth of the newspaper.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University
Dhaka

Former PM and money whitening

The finance minister quite rightly refused to disclose details about the possible whitening of money by the former prime minister and her two sons, under the Income Tax Ordinance of 1984, preventing the disclosure of such information about Taxpayers' whitening of undisclosed money. (The BNP insisted she

whitened white money. Why would she want to do that? Does she also send her fresh laundry out for further laundering?)

This Ordinance is undoubtedly good protection for private taxpayers, but whether this should extend to someone who was elected to public office and served as the prime minister of the country is debatable. Her sons, who did not serve in the government, could enjoy this privacy. In fact, no persons elected to public office, or who are in government service and receive their salaries from taxpayer's funds, should benefit from this privacy clause.

Syed Hamde Ali
The Nawab Palace
Bogra

The 'Average' American

In my experience, the general consensus amongst people I have encountered and the countries I have visited, the 'Americans are fat and not that intelligent'.

They should realize that life is not just all about burgers and fries and wake up to all the atrocities caused by their government around the world. It was obviously a plan to get their mitts on the billions of dollars worth of natural resources (any doubts about Afghanistan's natural resources were quashed by the sudden 'discovery' of huge reserves a few days ago; plus add opium into that equation).

If the US is so keen on world peace and wiping out rogue leaderships/ states, what did they do about Robert Mugabe? Or what are they doing about the rise of extremism in countries such as The Netherlands (anti Islamic extremism). Or why are they supporting Israel's illegal activities and endorsing what I call 'legal terrorism'?

So, is the 'average American' stupid? In a world of need and greed, supporting an organisation (the US government) that will just keep catering for the obese persons' only desire of burgers, fries and soda, might also actually be the work of a smart, but ignorant population.

Chisty Iftekhar
Chittagong

"A" level exams

The "O" and "A" level exams are patently very important for the students who have a dream to go abroad for higher studies and intend to build a bright future. The British Council bears the responsibility to conduct those exams by itself and nominating some other institutions and centres in Dhaka and other cities in our country. Achieving a good result in those exams is a mandatory requirement for admissions in foreign colleges and universities. Seemingly the standard and authenticity of the exams taken by the British Council are highly praised and accepted worldwide.

My son is appearing in "A" level exams this year. Since he is a student of Academia School, Lalmatia, his seat was also set there. During frequent outages of electricity all their air-conditioners remained off and the backup system or the generator could not bear the load required for fans and lights together. The screeching sound of the generator is not only annoying for the examinees, it is mind-distracting too. So, the students have to suffer severely during electricity outages and in this searing heat and humidity. We tried to talk to the authorities regarding the disadvantages but the director of the institution could not make time to talk to the guardians, in spite of repeated requests. We brought this matter to the knowledge of the British Council exam authorities but failed to get any positive outcome as yet. My son has fallen ill by this time.

British Council should immediately look into the matter.

Babu Munir

Purana Paltan

Dhaka

The great Prophet (SM)

According to our Rasul (Pbuh), there is no hermitage in Islam.

Every believer- wherever he may be- can try to follow the ideals of the greatest Nabi (Pbuh) as far as possible to become an 'Oli' (friend) of Allah.

Our dearest Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Pbuh) says, "It is I who have narrated all the useful words to all." There is, indeed, none like our dearest Rasul (Pbuh), the dearest Friend of Allah. Everyone should, therefore, always love him more than one's own soul to be a perfect 'Mumin' (believer), as narrated in the holy Hadith.

Habibur Rashid Ismail

Chittagong

Negative politics

In Bangladesh there are more than one hundred political parties, out of which two major political parties namely the BNP & the Awami League (AL) come to power alternatively since 1991 after restoration of the democratic process. All other parties rally behind these two just to get a small share from their leading parties. The AL is the oldest one and led the liberation war in 1971. The BNP was born after assassination of the father of the nation in 1975. Anyway, this party founder was a freedom fighter who took control of the country during a turmoil which was going on after the assassination of the country's founding leader.

Both the parties have gained peoples' support and both parties now enjoy equal electoral support. So, in a new democracy, this development is a good sign for the country's future politics. We believe, if both these parties could avoid confrontational politics, come closer on the issues of national interest, Bangladesh will emerge as a democratic, moderate Muslim and a self-reliant country. This entirely depends on the leaders of the two parties. What we saw in the past, one was blaming the other for all wrongs that had happened. They abuse each other, sometimes, in a very unacceptable way, they cannot see each other's faces, they spread hatred among their supporters towards other party leaders which only widens discontentment. There are some so-called intellectuals in both sides who write and talk negative things about the rival leader. Many of them distorted history of liberation just to align themselves with their leader for personal gains.

I do not want to repeat the languages the party chiefs use against each other.

When will matter change for the better?
Shafiqul Islam, NY

Breakthrough in jute research

June 17th will be a significant day for the jute industry in Bangladesh.

It was the day when all dailies and the news media reported the discovery of identifying the genes of the jute cell. This discovery by Dr. Maqsoodul Alam, Professor of Microbiology at the University of Hawaii, USA and further research on it, can possibly help us to modify the DNA of the jute cell. This will enable the jute fibre to have improved properties, like water and fire resistant traits, among others!

It can also help in having jute seeds, rot free and repellent to insects. All these developments can revive the future of jute, and make it regain its place as the most useful and cheap fibre for all sorts of uses, that are today not even imagined! Indeed a new future awaits jute. It will increase its world demand, possibly replacing products like waterproof paper and other packaging materials like corrugated sheets, paper boards etc. This discovery will herald a very bright future of our jute industry, currently in doldrums!

Dr. Alam and his team of scientists from the department of biotechnology and bio-chemistry, University of Dhaka, deserve thanks and recognition from the country, which they thoroughly deserve. Well done, gentlemen!

Engr.S.A. Mansoor

Dhaka

At first, I would like to congratulate Dr. Alam for his outstanding research on jute. His research will open the new window of genetic engineering in Bangladesh.

Vocational training

Our country's educational systems are not well-planned like the other developing or developed countries. We have systems such as Bangla medium, English medium, madrasa education, vocational education etc.

The students of different disciplines follow different curricula. For example, a student of general medium does not get any technical or vocational training. But it is the crying need of time to have vocational or technical knowledge to keep pace with the fast growing world. On the other hand, if we look at the educational curricula of developed countries, they impart their students vocational training on at least one subject.

To sum up, I would like to request the authorities concerned to consider the above mentioned point.

Md. Zahidul Islam Zibon
Dept. of English
International Islamic University Chittagong

Burden of unemployment

An unemployed person knows best how much burdensome life can be. This stage of life begins at the end of one's institutional education. Guardians tend to expect

Actually, Biotechnology is called the science of 21st century. It has a tremendous potential to solve problem in agricultural sector, and can be a powerful tool to cope with the existing food insecurity. I talked with the Head of the Dept of Biotechnology (BAU) and national coordinator of ISAAA(Int'l service for the acquisition of agribiotech) Dr. KM Nasiruddin about different issues on agribiotech. He said that the ever increasing population,



limited cultivatable land and increasing demand for alternative energy sources has led to increasing application of the biotechnology techniques in the Indian agricultural arena. Various research institutes and departments of the government of India and other state governments are directing their efforts to exploring and exploiting newer technologies for enhancing farm production and increasing the productivity. But here in Bangladesh the biotech issue is still under controversy.

There is a lot of anti-science emotions here and Bangladesh is yet to concentrate on crop biotech.

In India, with the approval of Bt-cotton for commercial cultivation in April 2002, more and more seed companies are seeking technologies like genetic modification for insect protection. There is also an increasing use of molecular markers in crop breeding.

Jewel Rana
Ex-Student, Dept of Biotechnology
Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh

disappointed. The budget has proposed to impose Value Added Tax/VAT on all services. This reminds one of the remarks made by Sir Winston Churchill.

While opposing the bill to grant independence to India and Pakistan introduced by Clement Atlee in the British House of Commons, he said, "Not a bottle of water or a loaf of bread shall escape taxation; only the air will be free..." Perhaps our government's national budget has neglected to provide more funds for the free and fresh air even!

During the political and parliamentary turmoil regarding budget and other national issues, cutting off the chain of hate should be thought-provoking and timely. Nietzsche and Martin Luther King Jr. present two mutually exclusive models: one model that represents unrestrained power and is devoid of any love; and the other that is selfless and divine, submerging all our powers in the service of humanity, especially the marginalized. While the recent advances in neurobiology leading to the discovery of a genetic basis for altruism, our politicians must also keep in mind the contribution of scientists like Richard Dawkins, who have spoken of 'selfish genes.'

Unless our leaders choose

the path of non-violence and love in their exercise of power, humanity is bound to sink into turmoil and anarchy.

Avik Sengupta
Student of Biochemistry
McGill University
Balaram Sengupta
Student of MBA at
Concordia University
Canada

Why coaching centre?

Nowadays coaching centres are growing like mushrooms around the famous schools in Dhaka city. Most of the teachers who teach Math, English and Science have individual coaching centres or batches. Guardians and students are not actually interested in going to coaching centres but the teachers persuade them to go there by providing notes, sheets and short suggestions before exams. Finally, the teacher gives them more marks. As a result, students and teachers cannot concentrate fully during class time.

My question is, if the teacher completes the whole syllabus before the exams and provides required material in class, what is the necessity of coaching centre?

M.D. Hossain
Institute of social welfare and research (ISWR)
University of Dhaka

DAP and some questions



I have followed the articles in your paper regarding the protection of wetlands which I find a very responsible thing to do, but my concern is that by closing these private developments we will further the gap between the rich and poor in our country, if DAP is implemented the prices of available land/houses will go up three times. And those people who already have one or two houses in Dhaka city will become richer, (including those who are adamant to close down these private companies). Then who will listen to the plight of masses of middle class?

The land in our country is soil that has accumulated gradually over centuries from flow of rivers in this plain. Protection of this natural environment is very important.

Development of land and housing has become necessary in Bangladesh, in Dhaka alone 70% of the people do not have their own house. Discouraging private development in the outskirts of Dhaka city will mean death to the dreams of people who had hope of buying a house or own a land. The population of Bangladesh at present is round 16 to 17 crore and by 2015 it will be more, by 2020 it will be still greater. I guess that the government of Bangladesh does not have plans of where they will house these people. Even the few government housing states are on wetlands.

In Dubai they have built cities in oceans; they have built almost a kilometre long tower. Do you think these were not harmful to the natural environment?

Mohammad Ismail
New York
USA