

# Root of democracy

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M. ABDUL LATIF MONDAL

**T**HE parliamentary standing committee on local government, rural development and cooperatives ministry in its meeting on November 25 stressed on the need for enacting a law to ensure holding of elections to local governments in different administrative units of the republic on time so that no people's representatives there could stay in power after expiry of his/her tenure.

The meeting, attended by lawmakers from the treasury bench and the opposition benches, took this decision after observing that sometimes elections to different local government bodies could not be held within their stipulated time due to various complications, including those related to delimitation of area and preparation of voter list.

The committee asked the LGRD and cooperative ministry to draft the law in such a way that no complication could

unit of the republic shall be entrusted to bodies composed of persons elected in accordance with law.

The history of local governments in what is now Bangladesh has not been pleasant since Pakistan days. The three-tier democratic local government system -- District Board in districts, Local Board in sub-divisions and Union Committee for a group of villages -- introduced during the British rule through the Local Self-Government Act 1885, was suspended by the military dictator Ayub Khan.

It was reintroduced as a four-tier system through the Basic Democracies Order 1959, which provided for appointment of bureaucrats as chairmen of the district level and the sub-division level local government bodies in place of elected chairmen. This resulted in the loss of democratic nature of these two very important local government bodies.

In the early years of independent Bangladesh, the AL government not

their independence to the MP advisers who have the last say in running the affairs of the UZPs.

The local government body at the district level has mostly remained non-functional in Bangladesh. The Zila Parishad (ZP), established by the Zila Parishad Act 1988, was headed by the government appointed chairman whilst MPs, UZP and Paurashabha chairmen of the concerned district, nominated members, and certain officials were its members. The ZP system ceased to exist with the fall of Ershad government in December 1990.

In the last 38 years or so, no election was held to form elected bodies to run the affairs of the ZPs. Article 52(1) of the Constitution defines "administrative unit" as "a district or other area designated by law for the purpose of Article 59" which provides for establishment of local governments to be run by the locally elected persons. So, non-holding of elections to the district level local government body, i.e. to the ZPs, for such a long period amounts to violation of Article 59 of the Constitution.

It was pointed out in the roundtable that the tenure of the elected representatives in most of the paurashabhas and unions had expired long ago. But they were continuing in their positions due to non-holding of elections to these local government bodies.

Election to Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has become uncertain, although the tenure of this elected body expired more than three years ago. Sources say that the AL-led government does not want to hold the election now because city-dwellers have been experiencing various problems, including insufficient supply of electricity, gas and water. Besides, the traffic congestion in the capital city has reached an intolerable level.

This has prompted some critics to say that election to the DCC may not be held until there is marked improvement in public utility services and traffic management in the city because the opposition will capitalise on these issues if the election is held in these circumstances, and the ruling party may face debacle.

An elected Parliament at the national level does not alone speak for full-fledged democracy in the country. Actually, elected local government bodies in different units of the republic act as pillars for establishing democracy at grassroots level. This calls for immediate elections to the tenure-expired local government bodies as well as to those local government bodies where elections were not held at all in past. Narrow party interest must not prevail upon greater national interest.

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hinder holding of the elections to local governments within the stipulated time.

Earlier, on November 23, the speakers at a roundtable -- "Local Government Elections and Strengthening Democracy" -- organised by Shushashoner Jonney Nagorik, a citizen's rights organisation, demanded elections to local governments without further delay, saying that full-fledged democracy would not be established without elections.

Democracy is one of the fundamental principles of state policy. It is clearly stated in Article 11 of the Constitution that "the Republic shall be a democracy." State power is exercised not only at the central level but also at the local levels. Article 59 of the Constitution has mandated that local government in every administrative

only dissolved all the existing local government bodies through President's Order Number 7 of 1972 and appointed administrators to take over their functions, but also deleted Article 59 of the Constitution, which provided for establishment of local governments in different units of the republic to be administered by locally elected representatives, through the Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act, 1975.

The Upazila Parishads (UZP), which were introduced by the military ruler H.M. Ershad in the eighties and headed by directly elected chairmen, was abolished by the democratically elected BNP government soon after it came to power in 1991. The UZPs, reintroduced by the incumbent AL-led alliance government, have lost

# Watch your mouth

It seems that in the name of "free speech" another blow has been struck against frank speech. Yet more ammunition has been given to those who favour greater circumspection, greater political correctness, and greater hypocrisy.



ANNE APPLEBAUM

**I**'m sure the Russian people will be shocked -- shocked! -- to discover that US diplomats think the Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev, "plays Robin to Putin's Batman." Italians will be equally horrified to learn that their Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, is considered "feckless, vain, and ineffective as a modern European leader," just as the French will be stunned to hear President Nicolas Sarkozy called "thin-skinned and authoritarian." As for the Afghans, they will be appalled to read that their President, Hamid Karzai, has been described as "an extremely weak man who did not listen to facts."

And anyone perusing the semi-secret diplomatic cables published by WikiLeaks this week will find more of the same. Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe is a "crazy old man." Muammar Qaddafi of Libya travels with a "voluptuous blonde" whom he describes as his "senior Ukrainian nurse."

In the coming days, there will be many things to say about the specific details of these newly public documents. But before we get into all that, let's not lose the main point: Above all, this leak contains a treasure trove of things people regularly say off the record that they never say in public.

These aren't records of human-rights abuses, they are accounts of conversations. And, just like July's WikiLeaks revelations about Afghanistan, this one confirms much that was publicly known, openly discussed, and even written about before.

The cables "reveal," among other things, that the United States is (surprise!) lobbying others to organise sanctions against Iran, that South Korean diplomats have discussed what would happen if North Korea collapses, that US diplomats have been bribing other countries to accept ex-prisoners from Guantanamo Bay. (I suppose it is "news" that the United States spies on the United Nations, but forgive me if I am not as horrified as I should be.)

Germany's Der Spiegel concludes, furiously, that the United States "seeks to safeguard its influence around the world." I'd be a lot more worried if the opposite were true.

What is truly novel is not the information, much of which has been reported before, but the language. Normally poker-faced diplomats are quoted making unflattering and occasionally amusing assessments of their interlocutors. Not all of them are Americans. The Saudi king thinks the Pakistani president is "rotten;" France's top diplomat thinks Iran is a "fascist state;" Britain's national bank chairman thinks his prime minister is "shallow;" and so on.

This is certainly embarrassing for those who made the remarks. I am less sure whether their revelation gets us anywhere. On the contrary, it seems that in the name of "free speech" another blow has been struck against frank speech. Yet more ammunition has been given to those who favour greater circumspection, greater political correctness, and greater hypocrisy.

Don't expect better government

from these revelations, expect deeper secrets. Will the US ambassador to Country X give Washington a frank assessment of the president of X if he knows it could appear in tomorrow's newspaper? Not very likely. Will a foreign leader tell any US diplomat what he really thinks about Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad if he knows it might show up on WikiLeaks? I doubt it.

Diplomatic cables will presumably now go the way of snail mail: Oral communication will replace writing, as even off-the-record chats now have to take place outdoors, in the presence of heavy traffic, just in case anyone is listening.

In the modern world -- at least the sloppy, open, hackable Western world -- any other form of frank discussion will soon be impossible. The State Department isn't the first to learn this: No American general will ever again give a journalist full access, as did the hapless Stanley McChrystal. Because he revealed that -- like every other general in history -- he sometimes disagrees with the politicians back home, and because his interlocutor chose to publish his grumbling, he had to resign.

The result: Very soon, only authoritarian leaders will be able to speak frankly with one another. A Russian official can keep a politically incorrect statement out of the newspapers. A Chinese general would never speak to a journalist anyway. Low-level officials in Iran don't leak sensitive information to WikiLeaks because the regime would kill them and torture their families. By contrast, the soldier who apparently leaked these diplomatic cables will probably live to a ripe old age.

In fact, the world's real secrets -- the secrets of regimes where there is no free speech and tight control on all information -- have yet to be revealed. This stuff is awkward and embarrassing, but it doesn't fundamentally change very much. How about a leak of Chinese diplomatic documents? Or Russian military cables? How about some stuff we don't actually know, like Iranian discussion of Iranian nuclear weapons, or North Korean plans for invasion of South Korea?

If WikiLeaks' founder Julian Assange is serious about his pursuit of "Internet openness" -- and if his goal isn't, in fact, embarrassing the United States -- that's where he'll look next. Somehow, I won't be surprised if he doesn't.

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# Importance of personality development

Training in personality development enhances the general as well as unique traits (characteristics which differentiate one from others) of a person. A teacher of personality development helps a person to get positive thought pattern, gain confidence, improve behaviour, learn better communication and develop a healthy physique.

KHANDAKER ZIA HASAN

**P**ERSONALITY means the characteristics and appearance of a person -- his thoughts, feeling, behaviour, communication ability and physical features. A child inherits many personality traits from its parents. The personality of a person takes its basic formation during early childhood. A child's experiences in the family and the society are very crucial.

Friends, teachers and the environment of the school have their own positive or negative impact. Parents need to be very careful while rearing a child. To develop positive thinking in the child, they must relate to each other in a positive way. Parents simply can't deny the fact that they have to learn this to teach their children to make them fit for the 21st century.

Previously, it was thought that every person lived his or her whole life according to the personality script written in childhood. To change was almost impossible. But after years of research and practical applications the

view has changed. With the help of simple methods anybody can develop a winning personality and change his or her future.

A few years ago parents rarely gave any importance to personality development of their children. Emphasis was given only on physical appearance and expertise in work. But now the time has changed, even in Bangladesh. It is an age of competition and economic revolution. To reach the goal of vision 2020, we have to implant the seeds of personality development in our young generation right from their boy/girlhood, which will pay off tremendously in their future life.

With the help of good training a child or an adult can learn communication skills, different subjects, driving or computer operating. Similarly, training in personality development enhances the general as well as unique traits (characteristics which differentiate one from others) of a person. A teacher of personality development helps a person to get positive thought pattern, gain confidence, improve behaviour,

learn better communication and develop a healthy physique.

Many people still think that personality is related to the physical appearance of a person. If a person is well-built and wearing a good dress it is said that he/she has a good personality. But this is not a rational approach. In case the inner personality of a person is weak he/she will lose impact as soon as he/she speaks or acts. Such a person fails to create a lasting impression on others, and rising in his/her career becomes a very difficult task. Therefore, both the inner and the outer personality of a person should be strengthened.

Now the million-dollar question is how to brush up on your personality so that people say: "Here goes a person with personality!"

Try these simple but highly effective tips:

**• Set an aim in life:**

If you sit in the boat of life without knowing your destination you will become the slave of circumstances and other people. Your progress or development will totally depend on your luck. To change this scenario you need to set an aim for your life. It is true that a person has several aims in life but to decide the chief aim is essential to make good progress. When you have an aim it is like a destination -- you can chart your route, plan your action and formulate strategies to reach there quickly.

**• Power of knowledge:**

Knowledge is power. Nobody is impressed with a person who doesn't even know what is happening in the world. He is considered a fool whom no wise man or woman would like to befriend or follow. Therefore, it is necessary to enrich your general knowledge, and you should be the master of the field in which you are working. To update your general knowledge: a) read newspaper, b) watch informative programmes on TV, c) read good and popular books, d) interact (interrelate, communicate) with intelligent persons.

**• Look confident:**

A look of confidence on your face impresses everybody. If you walk with a feeling of failure and frustration on your face people will simply avoid you. Even if you are facing difficulties and worries in your life, you must know how to think and look positive. Shake hands with others firmly. While shaking hands or talking make eye contact with others and don't forget to wear a smile!

**• Speak in style:**

Most of the successful persons maintain a unique style in speaking. They speak clearly and forcefully. Be careful that you have a good command on the language you speak. Don't make grammatical mistakes else you may become a laughing stock. If necessary take training from a good teacher. Give extra care to your pronunciation. Speaking power is an essential trait of any good personality.



**• Dress smartly:**

A smartly dressed person is admired everywhere. By observing successful people in any field, you will come to the conclusion that most of the successful persons in almost every field have a keen taste for good dresses. Good dresses also prove a stimulus for the wearer. He/she feels more confident and relaxed.

**• A healthy body:**

A body burdened with disease may get pity of others but it is very difficult for that person to maintain an attractive personality. A healthy and smart look is absolutely essential to attract others. And if you work on it you can easily attain it. Take exercise regularly, play games or go for a morning walk -- whatever suits your body and psychology. Eat a balanced diet.

**• Good habits:**

A man is generally a creature of his habits. With bad habits you may become a sheer nuisance for others. Then how will you impress them? Cleanliness, punctuality, completing your work on time, fulfilling your promises, having sincerity and dedication to work, listening to other people with empathy, keeping yourself away from smoking and drinking are the habits which add sparkle and dynamism to your personality. They endear you to people.

Last but not the least, you are what you think you are...so, think big and live big!

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