

## Gazipur city corporation polls

### Cooperation of all concerned expected

VOTERS go to polls on July 6 to elect a new mayor for Gazipur. Amidst allegations and counter allegations about violation of campaign rules by both the ruling party and the opposition, the atmosphere is obviously charged. Allegations have been levelled at the opposition bloc for whipping up religious sentiments to woo votes. For the ruling party, it was high drama as a local leader broke ranks with the high command to run for office. That chapter too has come to an amicable solution.

Having lost four major mayoral elections, winning at Gazipur is of paramount importance to Awami League from a prestige point of view. For the opposition, a win at Gazipur would be a massive morale booster to its rank and file. Yet, as with any election, there will be a winner and loser. We trust that polling will be free and fair for Gazipur residents to choose who leads their city and results accepted gracefully. Because a tense atmosphere has preceded the run-up to the elections, all concerned are expected to apply restraint.

In that context, it is expected that the Election Commission (EC) will exercise full authority in preventing any untoward incident that may occur in an attempt to sway voting. As the EC has ruled out the deployment of the army, a principal demand of the opposition parties, we hope the body is capable of handling the situation, as it has done so in the previous four mayoral elections.

## Upswing in remittances

### Explore newer avenues

LOOKING at the bright side of things, the central bank reported that Bangladesh received a record \$14.46 billion of remittance in the last fiscal year. Two-thirds of the remittance came from the Middle Eastern countries, and this year's remittance is 12.59 per cent higher than that of last year.

While this great news for Bangladesh's economy it doesn't necessarily mean that the allowance of ex-pats have increased in the past year but rather the infrastructure for transferring funds to Bangladesh has improved significantly. More banks have branches in foreign countries and they have also gained the trust of their customers abroad.

The credit here should go to those banks that have done an excellent job of expanding their reach and promoting and providing their services to the workers overseas. Hopefully, this will obviate remittance of money through informal channels.

The remittance figure does not necessarily reflect an increased volume of manpower export. The Middle East's new policy on legalising a good portion of the foreign workers who lacked proper immigration papers has surely brought in greater sense of security for the overseas wage-earners.

We hope this positive trend will continue and be built up on through exploration of newer markets for our manpower and diversification of skills.

## Branding Bangladesh

MEHERUNNESSA NABI and MOHAMMED AL-AMIN SHAFKAT

BDANGLADESH, our beautiful Bangladesh. The word 'beautiful' creates an image of green meadows, blue rivers, golden paddy, marvelous rainfall, charming winter, fruity summer, Royal Bengal Tiger, Sundarbans, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, Rangamati and so on in the minds of Bangladeshis. But underneath this beauty, problems like poverty, natural calamities, political mishaps, withdrawal of GSP facilities, inflation, screams and tears of RMG workers are infecting the land. And unfortunately these are what or how most of the world knows of Bangladesh.

Thinking about how can we erase that, one idea popped into our minds, a new potential industry can help in creating a Brand of Bangladesh. The industry is tourism. And it is good to know that the idea is turning into action.

For the past few decades the top tourist attractions around the world have adopted a strategy of destination and country branding. Through proper positioning efforts and creation of brand image in the minds of tourists, these countries and places have reaped the benefit with huge revenues. Tourism industry in the neighbouring countries such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and India is given priority under state-patronage. As they say 'Incredible India,' 'Malaysia—truly Asia,' so we say 'Beautiful Bangladesh.'

Furthermore, country branding is very popular among these countries. Consequently, tourism is one of the chief sources of earning foreign exchange and employment generation in all of these countries. In addition, remarkable growth and development of tourism has taken place in countries with socio-religious environment similar to Bangladesh. Malaysia and Indonesia are among such countries. All these success stories underline the massive importance branding tourism possesses.

Fortunately, the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism of Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation have realised what needs to be done straight away. After long deliberations and a number of delayed attempts, the Bangladesh tourism branding effort was finally launched formally in the month of December, 2008. The branding slogan for the country has been selected as "Beautiful Bangladesh," and the branding logo depicts a rising sun over the dancing waves of the sea.

The writers are under-grad students at East West University.

# Egypt: Return of the Generals

MAHMOOD HASAN

PRESIDENT Mohammed Morsi of Egypt has finally been ousted by the Army Chief General Abdel-Fattah al-Sissi. This had long been coming.

On July 1, the first anniversary of Morsi's presidency, tens of thousands of people and Tamarod (youth rebels) gathered at Tahrir Square to demand Morsi's resignation. Thousands also gathered in Nasr City, few kilometers from Tahrir Square, near the Presidential Palace to demonstrate support for Morsi. Events moved quickly since then.

Since January 2011 Egypt has been going through a difficult phase of political instability. Tahrir Square infected by "Arab Spring" saw the fall of powerful dictator Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. Mubarak's departure left a gaping void in Egyptian politics. The dominant force of the country—the armed forces—abandoned Mubarak and took control of the nation and guided it through parliamentary and presidential elections in 2012. The elections catapulted Freedom and Justice Party (Muslim Brotherhood) with a majority in the Parliament and Mohammed Morsi to the presidency.

The coming to power of Muslim Brotherhood soon turned bitter, leaving the people divided and disillusioned. President Morsi and his Brotherhood colleagues quickly alienated major segments of the society. True, vested groups of the Mubarak era were there to scuttle Morsi's presidency. But Morsi could not rise above their conniving and offer an inclusive government by accommodating the demands of major opposition groups. The seize mentality of Morsi got the better of him and he committed one blunder after another.

Morsi had been at odds with the 'Supreme Council of Armed Forces' (SCAF) and the 'Supreme Constitutional Council' (SCC) from the beginning. Before Morsi was sworn in, SCAF dissolved the newly elected Parliament and assumed full legislative powers. Upon entering office Morsi revoked the SCAF decree and dismissed several generals, including Field Marshal Tantawi.

Morsi also tried to reinstate the parliament but that was defeated due to resistance from the judiciary. Undaunted, Morsi hurriedly got the drafting Committee to write the 'Sharia' based Constitution and moved to ratify it through referendums in December 2012. The liberal secular opposition parties stiffly opposed the controversial constitution and demanded redrafting of it. By abusing power he appointed Brotherhood members as governors of different Governorates and in important positions of the government.

Instead of addressing the economic downside, Morsi got busy implementing his Islamist agenda. The tourism industry, which employs a huge labour force and contributes billions of dollars to the economy, is in shambles. Frequent power cuts, long queues for fuel, and rising price of bread were enough to stir the lower income groups. People were equally livid at the total collapse of law and order.

Defiant Morsi estranged the liberals, seculars, corporate, leftists and the younger generation, who spearheaded the movement against Hosni Mubarak, by shunning them. The minority Coptic Christians and Shia community were left marginalised. In short, adamant Morsi, instead of being inclusive, went ahead to govern alone. Thus the stage was set for confrontation between the presidency and different sections

of the society.

of the society.

Taking note of the anger at Tahrir Square, Army Chief General Abdel Fattah al-Sissi issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the government. It said: "The Armed Forces call (on the government) for the people's demands to be met and give everyone 48 hours as a last chance to shoulder the burden of the historic moment... put everyone on notice that if the demands of the people are not realised in the given time period, it will be obliged ... to announce a road map for the future and the steps for overseeing its implementation with the participation of all patriotic and sincere parties and movements..." The ultimatum ended on July 3 at 16.30 hours.

The ultimatum spurred five ministers to resign from Morsi's cabinet. Beleaguered Morsi rejected the ultimatum and delivered a speech on July 2, claiming that he was the elected president and had constitutional legality to continue. He admitted he had made mistakes and asked for time to rectify them. But his confession came too late. Morsi had squandered a golden opportunity to consolidated democracy in Egypt. He is now under house arrest.

Later in the evening General al-Sissi announced on television that President Morsi was being removed from his post, as he lost legitimacy for not being able to meet the demands of the people. The general was flanked by the heads of the Al Azhar and the Coptic Church, to demonstrate that his roadmap was all inclusive. The constitution has also been suspended. The general nominated Chief Justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court Adly Mahmoud Mansour as the interim president. Mansour will supervise the parliamentary and presidential elections. Mansour was sworn in on July 4. Egyptian newspaper 'Al Ahram' called this "Revolution Part 2."

Some legal questions will now arise. Did General al-Sissi declare martial law? Was it a coup d'etat? Can a general dismiss an elected president — under what provisions of law? Mansour swore by the constitution — which constitution, the suspended one? Which law governs Egypt now? What is the time frame for holding the elections? Mansour was appointed as chief justice of SCC on June 30 and now he is the president. Though he is known as a jurist he has practically no experience in politics. Clearly, the generals will be behind this unelected civilian figurehead to run the affairs of the state.

The crisis has aroused worries around the world, particularly in the West. Washington has been in contact with General al-Sissi and Morsi over the past few days. Washington, though, is in an awkward position with the dismissal of an elected president. It is probably not so unhappy with the developments. Israel also allowed the Egyptian army to move troops along Gaza border. Britain and Saudi Arabia have already welcomed the new government.

The road to democracy is never smooth, it has many potholes. Egypt's 30-month experiment with democracy has dramatically fallen into an abyss. It had an unbroken span of military rule since the days of Revolution of 1952 -- Gamal Nasser (1956), Anwar Sadaat (1970), Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011). Now that General Abdel-Fattah al-Sissi is at the helm, incarcerated Hosni Mubarak is probably having a hearty laugh.

The writer is a former ambassador and secretary.

## The raging controversy

### STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

BY all accounts there is a rancorous debate over the type of government that should oversee the next general election slated for late this year or early next year. The prime minister is quite categorical in declaring that the general election has to be held under the watch of her elected government. The leader of the opposition is equally emphatic in her pronouncements that not only would they not participate in such election under the stewardship of the present prime minister they would also ensure that such election cannot take place.

The question is: Are there dangers in a society characterised by fragile institutions and a constitution which is looked upon by politicians as so pliant that it can be bent to any whim or caprice of the ruling class? This premonition arises in view of the potential stalemate over the issue of revival or otherwise of the neutral and non-partisan caretaker government, constitutionally incorporated but subsequently struck off, to oversee the general election.

Coming to specifics, is there much substance in the complaint that the caretaker government concept in Bangladesh would not have been necessary if the concerned state institutions acted firmly at the given time; when demands were made to ensure fair election?

To recollect, that brings us to the now-infamous Magura bye-election to the parliamentary seat in 1994. There were allegations of large-scale governmental interference in the run-up to that election. From the reports appearing in the media at that time it was abundantly clear that the Magura election had become a political caricature. An upright chief election commissioner could have declared postponement and called upon the contesting parties to behave. The law enforcing agencies including the armed forces could have been mobilised to ensure fair election. However, the then CEC, a member of the higher judiciary, showed no signs of firmness leading others to call it "timidity, some said indecisiveness and yet others termed this as a misplaced legal formalism."

The CEC was physically present on the spot in Magura and thus he did not need any report to assess the seriousness of the situation that demanded drastic action. It is only proper to say that the CEC is mandated by the Constitution to supervise and conduct the elections.

Legal experts are of the view that the CEC "has all the powers even beyond law to do all that is necessary in the ends of free and fair election" and "so long as he does not act arbitrarily, or do anything that is prohibited by law his actions are

immune from challenge."

A cardinal point highlighted in support of the movement for revival of caretaker government is the alleged partiality of public servants towards the incumbent political government, if election is held under such government. The question is, if and why public servants have become so pliant that they stand ever ready to execute irregular and illegal orders of their political bosses in clear violation of their constitutional obligations and functions.

If we retrace our steps then we will find that the concept of an independent body to recruit public servants free from political influence, to the extent possible, got firmly rooted in the constitution in the Indian sub-continent; later adopted by Pakistan.

At independence, we had a model to follow, quite clearly signifying that there are some elements in the principles of governance in a democratic country which are more or less immutable over time and space. Using the term colonial, as is done by many enthusiastic politicians and academics, in a pejorative sense, does not actually serve any useful purpose.

In Bangladesh, unfortunately, the issue of merit-based selection process in the civil service did not warrant adequate attention in the political establishment. It lost its homogeneous character, which is so vital for the morale of the service and the element of the esprit de corps that is necessary to maintain adequate working relationship and environment.

Successive political governments have shown utter indifference to civil service reform measures. There are apprehensions that the lurking distrust on the part of political leadership may have prompted them not to have a merit-based administrative system.

In fact, the political government and the Public Service Commission have never stood up to ensure quality of recruitment of the civil service. Between 1982 and 1992 the quality was compromised in the name of meeting urgent situations. We have not realised that it is not in the interests of a strong and mature political government to create and sustain a pliant bureaucracy, thereby crippling the state institutions.

No wonder we find ourselves mired in a situation wherein we cannot trust our public servants to act fairly and neutrally under a political government. Quite clearly, to our peril, the nurturing of service ethos has not been allowed.

While the caretaker government system is undeniably an unfortunate indictment of the unreliability of the political class, the fact remains that the arrangement drew the supreme judiciary into politics. In such an arrangement the role of political chief executive of the Republic contained the danger of distorting the constitutional scheme in which the Supreme Court exists and exercises its power and jurisdiction. The need, therefore, is to foster and cherish the professional growth and sustenance of the institutions of the Republic to ensure harmonious political succession.

The writer is a columnist of The Daily Star.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Face facts about GSP suspension

Some say that Bangladesh's image in the international business arena as a trade partner is stained by the US's decision to suspend the GSP facility. The US government has expressed its concern over labour rights and workers' safety in Bangladesh as the reasons behind taking this decision.

Now we are analysing the negative sides of this decision and even making this a political issue. But the fact is we failed to create any positive impact on the US government to continue the facility.

We want no more action in the name of punishing the greedy garment owners of Bangladesh, because it actually punishes the poor workers. We hope the Bangladesh government would sit with the political, social and business leaders to chalk out a plan of action for preventing any similar action adopted by the EU.

Mobarak Ali  
Gopibagh, Dhaka

### Commentary

The commentary of TDS editor Mahfuz Anam, published on June 27, was very bold and beautifully written. Anybody who loves the country will fully agree with him. Please keep on writing like this to enlighten the nation. It is the duty of all newspapers to point out such things before it is too late.

A patriot  
On e-mail

### Time for soul-searching

It is a pity that politics in our country has become dirty and unacceptable to the sane people. We are tired of corruption, character assassination and vandalism in the country. It must be stopped for the betterment of the nation. How long can we put up with hartals, intolerance and injustice? Our politicians never bother about the future of our children. Badmouthing and indecent behaviour of a few members of parliament are common. Educated but unemployed youths are being used by political parties. The law enforcing agencies have become crippled. The outsiders laugh at us seeing the situation. Self-purification and correction are the need of the hour.

Aan Shah  
Uttara, Dhaka

### Enrollment in universities

The public universities in the country enroll students once a year. So when a student fails to get admitted to a public university, he has to wait for a whole year to participate in the next admission test. Thus the admission process eats up the precious time of the admission seekers. On the other hand, a private university enrolls students every four months, matching up with the global education systems. I would like to draw the attention of the education ministry and the public universities to consider introducing this system.

Samrul Rajul  
Bangladesh University of Textiles  
Dhaka

### Comments on news report, "Muhith gave JS false statement," published on July 3, 2013

Ash C.

Mr. Muhit should either come up with a foolproof explanation to Yunus Centre's protest or submit unconditional apology to Prof. Yunus as well as the nation for giving false statement.

Monju Huq

Thanks to Dr. Yunus for clarifying his position in very clear and unequivocal terms.

Jahangir Alam

During his tenure people have suffered the most. It's for him that we had to experience the unchecked big scams like share market, Destiny, Sonali Bank, Hall-Mark, Padma Bridge and many more. All these corruption cases prove his and his ministry's inefficiency.

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### "Full freedom for trade unionism" (July 3, 2013)

Shahin Huq

Yes, after making the water muddy!

Nasirullah Mridha, USA

Labour leader Aminul who was killed by 'interest groups' for his vociferous movement of labour rights finally came to light. Let's see how the government implements this law to get back the GSP facilities from US.

Iftekhar Hassan

Excellent move by the government to put past behind and start anew. Cooperation of labour is more profitable than confrontation from labour.

Sheikh Monirul Islam, Opee

The government is acting like a bunch of criminals. Late action caused so much of embarrassment to the country internationally; and interestingly it all happened due to strong lobbying of those MPs in present parliament from RMG sector plus the lobbying from BGMEA and BKMEA. It is an embarrassment indeed to the nation.