

# Politics of Egos

FARID HOSSAIN

HEIKH Hasina and her team are already in the field, ready to play the election game. Her bitter rival Begum Khaleda Zia is not even in the dressing room. While the prime minister has vowed to go ahead with the vote, if necessary, without the opposition BNP leader raising political tension, the voters are being forced to endure untold sufferings mainly due to the waves of hartals called by the 18-party alliance led by Begum Zia. The political deadlock over the parliamentary elections, likely to be held in the first week of January, has led to violence that has left more than 30 people dead in just over two weeks.

A Bengali saying goes: One can't clap with one hand. It's true with the two most powerful women in today's Bangladesh. Surely, there are two sides of the story and both of them have to take the blame for leading our politics to a disaster threatening democracy for which they fought together over two decades ago.

Khaleda's game: She and allies are convinced that the upcoming election will be free and fair only if it is held under the supervision of a neutral non-partisan caretaker administration, which had been a constitutional provision until its abolishment in 2010 by the parliament



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

heavily dominated by Hasina's ruling alliance. She has vowed to boycott and resist the election if it is overseen by Hasina's government.

In order to force Hasina to bow to her demand Khaleda has resorted to the age-old tactic of staging one hartal after another so that the government machinery gets weak and exhausted and then leave power.

So far, Khaleda's method has failed to work. Instead of hurting the government the hartals are tormenting all sections of the society, from a rickshaw driver to a wealthy industrialist, from a school student to a transport worker. Hartals have shown how a still-respected leader can incur public disgust because of resorting to unpopular political tactics.

In response to unpopular hartals the government has hardened its stance and cracked down on the opposition arresting some top leaders like Moudud Ahmed and MK Anwar and raiding houses of many others. Khaleda's house and office in Gulshan have been put under a high security net. Confined to her house she is unable to meet with her political colleagues, most of them have gone into hiding. This has left the playground entirely to the control of Hasina.

Hasina's game: With Khaleda caught in the hartal trap, the prime minister has the field all to herself. She has launched the election campaign long before the

schedule is announced. She has been crisscrossing the country using her official programmes also to campaign for her party. Her Awami League party has opened the shop to sell election nomination forms to aspiring candidates. The first form has been collected on her behalf by the party's general secretary Syed Ashraf Islam. Hasina will contest from Gopalganj-3 constituency.

Hasina is also going ahead with her plan to form what she says a national government comprising members from all the political parties which have representation in the parliament, including Khaleda's Bangladesh Nationalist Party. BNP have refused to be on board.

Hasina does not mind. After her historic telephone conversation with Khaleda crashed before it could lead to a crisis-resolving dialogue, Hasina seems determined to play the election game without her arch rival forcing her out of the field.

Khaleda's ineffective and unpopular hartals can't stop Hasina from executing her plan. Hasina can be stopped only if Khaleda can cause a mass upsurge, which seems to be unlikely.

What next? The days ahead will definitely witness more chaos and violence. Judging by what has already happened, the nation braces for more bloodletting paying the price for a venomous power game being played by the two ladies.

Here is a possible scenario: Hasina forces through the polls amid a Khaleda boycott and wins the one-sided game. In doing so, she toughens her crackdown on the opposition even putting Khaleda behind the bar or under house arrest. That Khaleda can be arrested and face charges same as brought against her party's leaders such as Moudud and MK Anwar has been made public by Information Minister Hasanul Huq Inu and State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam in their speeches on the first day of the 84-hour hartal.

Not that Hasina is unaware that an election boycotted by the main opposition creates more problems for her than resolving any. She knows that she should not be tempted to hold a 15th February-like election making bitter a triumph Khaleda hated to taste in 1996. At the same time Hasina has now reached a stage where the possibility of a compromise with the opposition is slipping away with every passing day.

Khaleda, on the other hand, thinks she will never be allowed to win an election held under Hasina's supervision. So, boycott is better than participation. Resistance is better than contesting. Even if she fails to resist the vote, Khaleda would like to live for another day.

Both the ladies are wrong. In their drive to outrun each other they have distanced themselves from the people to whom they may still be popular but surely not as respected as before.

Hasina must understand that a victory in an election without Khaleda's participation may satisfy her ego for a while, but makes her a loser in the long term. Khaleda too should realize that her strikes are compounding only the public sufferings, not really serving the cause of democracy.

Hasina and Khaleda will do a great service to the nation if they leave their egos and become really bold to make big concessions. They should know what those concessions can be.

The writer is former Bureau Chief of AP, Bangladesh.

# Forging a new climate agreement

## POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



SALEEMUL HUQ

Lima, Peru in December 2014 a year from now before we get to Paris in December 2015. Some of the major issues that will need to be discussed and resolved are described below.

### Lessons from Copenhagen:

At COP15 in 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark, a similar attempt to come up with a future regime failed miserably. So the lessons from that failure need to be learnt so that they are not repeated. One of the lessons of Copenhagen was that the attempt to do everything in one big package at the end was asking too much. The paradigm of Copenhagen was "nothing is agreed unless everything is agreed". And since everything was not agreed, nothing was agreed! Hence, going forward to Paris, the parties need to try to achieve partial agreements on the way and use COP20 in Lima next year as an important stepping stone and milestone to agree some of the elements of the future regime.

Another important lesson is to involve the political leaders in the process from early on and not at the last minute as happened in Copenhagen. It was said about the failure of the talks in Copenhagen was because it was "too technical for the politicians and too political for the technical negotiators". So the negotiators must do what they can and then bring in the political leaders to do the final deal making. The high level meeting called by the Secretary General of the United Nations Mr Ban Ki Moon in September 2014 will therefore be an important point in time for political leaders to engage.

The two major issues that will need both technical negotiations and then political support and agreement will be on raising the ambitions of mitigation efforts and delivering on the financing of 100 Billion Dollars a year from 2020. I will discuss each of these in turn.

### Raising ambition on mitigation:

One major, positive, difference between Copenhagen and now is the attitude towards mitigation from all countries. In Copenhagen some of the major emitters were reluctant to take actions unless others too actions first. Hence when the talks ended in failure each party was able to blame others for the failure. The situation in the last few years has changed for the better. Now all countries, including all the developing countries are willing to take actions on mitigation and many have come with Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) and many have started implementing them. The developing countries have also said that they are willing to raise their mitigation ambitions if they receive technology and finance to do so. The problem is that if all these voluntary mitigation actions are added together

it still takes the world towards a temperature rise of well over 3 degrees Centigrade while we all agree that we want to stay well below 2 degrees. Hence, all countries are going to have to agree to raise their mitigation ambition in terms of reducing their emission of greenhouse gases.

### Financing actions to tackle climate change:

This is the second major open question where the developed countries have already promised to provide up to 100 Billion US Dollars a year to the developing countries to tackle climate change through both mitigation as well as adaptation. The good news is that the Green Climate Fund (GCF) has been successfully set up with its headquarters in South Korea slowly taking shape. Unfortunately, there is still no real money in the fund. The developed countries had promised 30 Billion Dollars over a three year period from 2010 to 2012 which has been largely delivered (although it is still difficult to trace exactly where the money has gone), but there are no real pledges for funds between 2013 and 2020. Developing countries will expect some pledges to be made in Warsaw.

### Loss and Damage:

One relatively new topic that will be discussed and negotiated in Warsaw will be the possibility of setting up a new International Mechanism on Loss and Damage. This was a demand that the alliance of small island states (AOSIS) and



least developed countries (LDC) group had made at COP18 in December 2012 in Doha, Qatar and was only resolved after tense negotiations that went into overtime in the last hours of COP18 in Doha.

That Doha decision on Loss and Damage has opened up the way to consider the setting up of a new international mechanism in Warsaw. However, it will require some tough and well prepared negotiations from the AOSIS and LDC negotiators to get what they want.

### Bangladesh's role:

The Bangladesh delegation is again expected to play an important role as part of the LDC Group supporting Nepal who currently chairs the group. Bangladesh's senior negotiators are well versed in their respective negotiating issues and the country also brings a great deal of experience from actual research and action on the ground in Bangladesh especially on adaptation as well as loss and damage. Bangladeshi NGOs are also important players in civil society groups who will be in Warsaw and will be able to play an important role there as well.

I will be providing feedback from Warsaw over the next two weeks and a round up after it is over.

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# If the people are the source of power...

MARTIN ADHIKARY

PEOPLE are the source of all authority and power in any democratic country. But in Bangladesh this saying has been proved enough to have been empty political jargon and demagoguery. Our political leaders are often heard to say that people are the source of power. But they do not have respect for the people in general and for their hopes and wishes. We are rendered helpless at the whims and their capricious politics. Above all considerations, democracy, as we have it in the oft quoted saying of Abraham Lincoln, is "a government of the people, by the people and for the people". This has ever since uttered by Lincoln the simplest and fondest definition of democracy. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh this has been a misnomer at least from the point of view of practice.

The tenth sovereign Parliament of the country is going to be created through the next general election to be held on any day by 24 January, 2014, but within the period of three months before that date. Citizens of the country are getting more and more concerned over what we may happen in the country politically. Already millions of dollars worth of damages have been wrought due to strikes and all the paraphernalia related to them during the last 3-4 years. There seems to be no compromise and neither any prospect mutually agreed upon dialogue between the ruling party and the alliance of the opposition in the house of the parliament. Almost every day columnist and journalists write in favor of dialogue between the ruling party and the parties in opposition. Nothing appears to avail any tangible good result. Our leaders are talkative people, indeed! They don't seem to love our people. They hear their opponents, but do not listen to them! The result is a deplorable continuation of political evils, killing of innocent human persons. It appears that we live in a reign of terror. Nobody's life seems to be safe and secure. The invitation of the government to the Opposition leaders for "dialogue" is still unheeded. Perhaps not without a reason since they do not see any positive outcome, at least from their perspective. Officially we live in a democratic country. But in practice our democracy is now terror-stricken because of our power hungry politicians. People everyday get more and more traumatized, made hostage to the whims of the ruffians on the streets on hartal days. Politicians seem to be the owners of this country. Our lives seem to be at their mercy.

One of the basic tenets of our State is our commitment to democracy. Should the very technical reason

with which the present government has been able to remove the provision of a Care Taker government through an enactment of the parliament be deemed enough reason for doing away with the need for a Care Taker government? Do all people elected by the citizens represent the nation in the legislature really represent the wishes and hopes of the nation in the end? In most cases the questions remains to be answered. They do not fulfill their pledges and promises made before their election. This is a sad trait of character with most of the representatives in the house of Parliament. So being the majority should not make them entirely authoritative and commanding the life and political aspirations of the people that have voted them to power. Is there much logic in what our honorable Prime Minister believes about the formation of an interim government with non-elected people? Are all non-elected people insane or incapable? Does it guarantee that all elected people or people, who are elected to positions, are the only good and trustworthy ones in the country and as such only they represent the wishes and hopes of the nation? There are some non-parliamentarians in the Cabinet of ministers with very important portfolios.

Peoples' lives are oppressed by corruption, hartals and all that they today mean. Corruption is rampant today in all government departments. Working for bribes make justice illusive and bred inefficiency and lethargy. Hoarding of unaccountable money lie behind black money causing price-hikes for everything. The cost of living goes up so that only the rich only can enjoy life while the rest of the people must struggle and suffer to meet their needs. The credibility of individuals and government goes down and mass of people lose their confidence and hope in the leaders. We now live in a country where the rich people are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Certainly this was not a country that the father of our nation and all other heroes of our liberation war had the vision for. This is more than transparent that most of our corrupt politicians have no love and concern for the ordinary people. They idolize and worship position and power even at the point of making our lives hellish for the sake of making their ambition and lust for power. Most people now in the country would like the leaders engage in a dialogue. Let peoples' wish be respected. Now grant us respite!

The writer is Principal of College of Christian Theology Bangladesh and Christian leader

*Does it guarantee that all elected people or people, who are elected to positions, are the only good and trustworthy ones in the country and as such only they represent the wishes and hopes of the nation?*

By THOMAS JOSEPH

## ACROSS

1 Frenzied

5 Diplomacy

9 Hemingway's

11 Find

13 Dwight's

14 Arrives

15 Spreading

16 Marks of

18 Tag line

20 Salt Lake

21 Pesky

22 Cameo

23 Auditor's

24 — Lanka

25 Clip

27 Town

29 — glance

30 Break

32 Squat

34 Pot brew

35 Early

36 Rap sheet

38 Crumpet's

39 Gallows

40 Cuts off

41 Scott

Turov

book

DOWN

1 British

sailor, in

slang

2 Place for

a bump

3 Inter-

change of

thoughts

4 Gallic

assent

5 Unspoken

6 Sick

as —

7 Conversion

to a

red state?

8 War ender



Yesterday's answer

10 Fixes, as

a clock

27 Sewing

aid

28 Comfort-

table

30 Bad habits

31 Studio

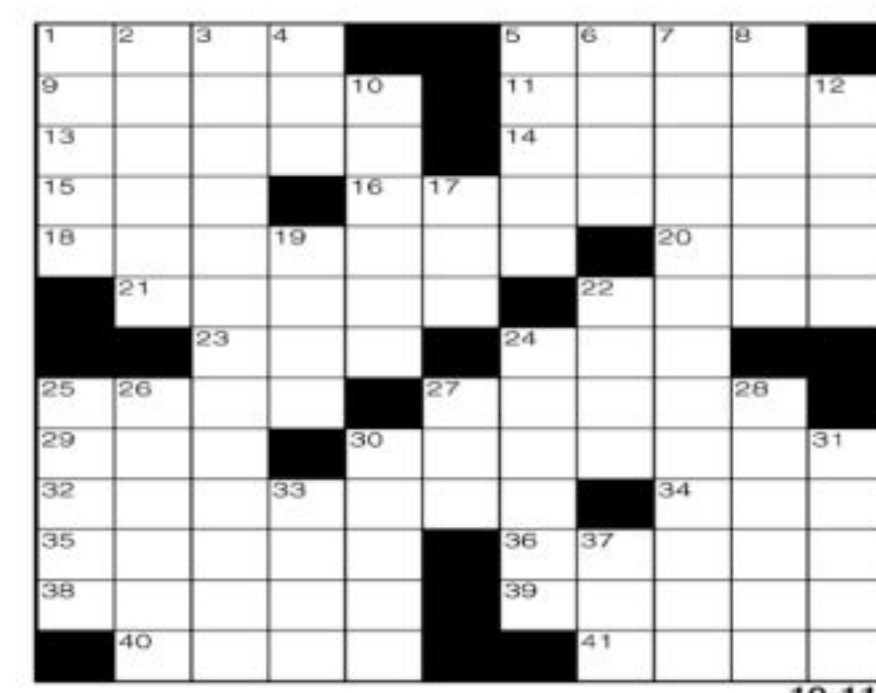
stand

33 Set of

cards

37 Old card

name



A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

On letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

10-12 CRYPTOQUOTE

FRBFGC CLF AFKC. BJBFIJF

PYJ CLF DYJJC. GIBNCIMNQF

YZ DLIC GYHFK. — QNO

QNOMIJ

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: KNOWING YOUR OWN DARKNESS IS THE BEST METHOD FOR DEALING WITH THE DARKNESSES OF OTHER PEOPLE.

-- CARL JUNG

## QUOTABLE Quote

"A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus."

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.

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