

How to put the democratic process back on track?

TAYEB HUSAIN

THIS article I write after reading Prof Rehman Sobhan's piece, "Putting Democratic Process Back on Track (DS, 19 Jan 2014). As an ordinary student of history I feel Bangladesh needs a drastic action to get rid of our rotten politics and corrupt administration. And



only by initiating a new political process Bangladesh can do that. And what that process could be?

A caretaker government should be formed immediately and a new election MUST be held within 6 months. A new system of election i.e. Proportional Voting System, replacing the present primitive "Majority Voting System" shall be used

for the new election.

This system represents democracy correctly, guarantees more accurate representation of parties, better representation for political and racial minorities, fewer wasted votes, a higher levels of voter turnout, better representation of women, greater likelihood of majority rule, and little opportunity for vote rigging, buying and using muscle power.

Decent people are attracted in politics by this system because they need not spend money or run after voters to be elected. A party who nominates people with questionable credentials would be rejected by the decent voters and thus, more decency would prevail in the election process. By this system, the government of the ignorant, of the undesirable characters, of the touts and terrorists, to some extent, is eliminated.

With it we would need also change in our administrative system. The future administration of the country shall have a strong local government making Union Parishad (UP) the only effective administrative unit by disbanding Upa-Zilla and district administration.

No doubt that change in the present election system would put the politics in the right direction but again, it would not function according to our desire if real and fundamental reforms were not brought in our present administrative system.

The countries of the Indian sub-continent had kings and queens and were ruled by personal fiat until the British came. They united India by the sword and introduced rule of law and an administrative system that was good for their colonial interest. Even today the colonial administrative apparatus are almost intact in these countries. Look at our DC, the omnipotent ruler of a district! What would hap-

pen in a district if there were no DC? Nothing, I can assure readers. Divisional, District, Upazilla administrations should not have any relevance in a modern democracy. These virtual non-performing entities deprive the base administration any real power or authority and we see only misrule everywhere.

In western democracies this base unit (UP) is the most powerful and I dare to suggest that a total overhauling of Bangladesh's administrative structure by transferring full power to the UP would make tremendous impact on the social, political and, most importantly, the economic development of Bangladesh. The UP again should have an elected body with an independent administrative unit to execute all decisions at local level. The executive branch of the UP should be independent but only to execute the UP's decision. Towns and cities shall be divided in UPs according to their population.

The UP shall be responsible for primary and middle school education, healthcare, law and order, housing, care for the destitute, employment of UP's every able-bodied person (men and women) and in short, UP should do everything that goes with the welfare of its inhabitants. UP shall act even as a primary court of justice and all local disputes shall be mitigated in this court. There should be even a small police force (3 / 4 policemen) and a jail in every UP. To co-ordinate between the central government and the UP a coordinating office can be established at district or divisional level with only power of co-ordination and nothing else.

The benefit of making UP all-powerful will have tremendous consequences not only in the administrative system but also in the whole structure of the country. Rule of law and an effective administration

can be established by giving all power to the UP. The UP members and the chairman are local leaders, everybody knows them and these leaders also know well who their followers are. Thus, crime levels would fall sharply in the villages/towns/cities, unnecessary litigation organised by the local leaders in most cases to the benefit of some touts in the district headquarters would be settled in the local levels and by the local leaders.

The very fact that a group of educated people would be brought to the village by this reform would again make the village life more colourful and interesting. And to cater to the needs of these people lots of entrepreneurs and businessmen would also emerge in the countryside making it more affluent. USA and UK do not follow proportional representation system but the administration of these two countries function because of a well-organised local government.

Now, we need to talk about democracy in our political parties. Without democracy in the political parties there can't be democracy in the country. Every political party must have every leader elected by its members and the national election commission, again, must conduct that election to make it fair and free so that dynastic tradition can thereby be broken for good.

We have highly corrupt political system, perpetual deadlock in politics, no real political consensus, no rule of law, fragile security, rampant corruption, highly politicised bureaucracy, ruined public institutions etc. etc. and as such no simple can help Bangladesh. Only a major surgery is the answer and only that can save the country. But is there any honest and skilful surgeon?

The writer lives and works in Lund, Sweden.

Competency-based general school curriculum?

ABDUS SATTAR MOLLA

CURRICULUM development process usually begins with knowing the needs (through situation analysis) of the people for whom the curriculum would be developed. Then decision is made on the national/state aims and goals of education based on the philosophy, psychology and sociology of the people concerned. Later on, level-wise (primary, lower or higher secondary) general objectives of education are developed. Some of the objectives fall in the cognitive, some in the affective and some others in the psychomotor domain developed by Benjamin Samuel Bloom (an American educational psychologist) in 1956.

Then the level-wise objectives are divided and distributed in subjects (e.g., language, math, science etc.) or grades of the level concerned. For example, development of scientific attitude in students is a general objective of (say, lower secondary) education. For this, several specific objectives, such as developing 1) basic science knowledge, 2) affection for that knowledge and 3) skills to collect and present evidence (i.e., field data), can be made first either for science subject or for grades 7, 8 or 9 and vice versa. Lastly, subject-based and grade-wise specific objectives are fine-grained into more specific and behavioral objectives termed 'learning outcomes' (e.g., learners will be able to analyze field data and formulate conclusions). Once the objectives are developed such fine-grained, contents to be studied are prepared in textbooks, these are taught in classroom situation and achievement of the objectives by the students is assessed through various methods. Describing educational objectives as learning outcomes help both preparation of contents and assessment of the outcomes well. The briefly described mode of curriculum development above is known as objective-based curriculum making.

There is another way of developing curriculum for special purposes such as to develop some skills or competencies necessary in technical, vocational or professional education. For this, 'competency-based' curriculum is developed for medicine, teaching, nursing, driving etc. This mode of curriculum development is not suitable for general education, especially in primary and secondary levels.

Yet some educationists in Bangladesh claim that our primary school (grades 1-5) curriculum was made competency-based over a

decade ago. Having doubt in my mind, I looked into the primary curriculum lastly revised in 2011 based on which new textbooks were written for the academic year 2012-'13. I found, the primary curriculum has 13 'objectives' that were divided into 29 'terminal competencies' and later those were distributed among different subjects and grades 1-5. Use of the word 'terminal' here is superfluous because an objective of education for any level is achieved only at the successful completion of learning; hence always 'terminal'. The finest level objectives, however, were termed 'learning outcomes' as in the secondary curriculum. I must say, both the 13 'objectives' and the 29 so-called 'terminal competencies' are all 'general objectives'. The 13 objectives are broader and 29 objectives are somewhat narrower; but most of them have combinations of cognitive, affective and psychomotor objectives. These can, in no way, be taken as competencies although some (of cognitive and psychomotor domains) have skill or competency-like expression.

I have been told that it was an Indian education consultant Ms. Adarsh Khanna who advised somebody in our education arena to prepare 'competency-based' curriculum and having a liking for the term 'competency', it was used for 'objectives' in the education plan (curriculum) of primary level both in 1998-2002 and in 2010-'11.

I feel relieved that our primary curriculum was actually not made 'competency-based,' only the term was used erroneously. What would happen if it were really made 'competency-based'? Our kids would have turned to machine-like 'doers' (professionals?) in such tender age, devoid of moral values, patriotism, and affection for parents, relatives and fellow countrymen! Thank God, little understanding of our primary curriculum consultants saved us from a disaster.

Now it's time to drive the word 'competency' away from our primary curriculum. Is competency a bad thing that I am proposing to drive this away? Not at all! We can make each and every training curriculum in teaching, medicine, nursing, driving, and the curriculum of every professional course 'competency-based'. The curriculum of any discipline of the tertiary level education (in universities) can also be made 'competency-based.'

The writer is PhD in Science Education (NIE, NTU, Singapore), and Senior Specialist, NCTB, Dhaka. Email: asmiolla@gmail.com

M. HOSSAIN, FCA

BANGLADESH has seen unprecedented growth of banks in private and public sectors to serve certain interested and purposeful politicians and bureaucratic persons.

Based on capital surplus of 38 private banks reported in The Daily Star on November 24, 2013, these Banks can be categorized into following categories:

Bangladesh Bank may conduct a proper investigation into the profitability, liquidity, capital surplus and other tests about the survival of the above banks in the competitive world of free market economy. The same test may be applied to all government banks.

| CATEGORY | DESCRIPTION | NO. OF BANKS |
|----------|---|--------------|
| First | Economically viable. | 8 |
| Second | Economically not viable but can merge with First Category | 12 |
| Third | Economically not viable, may be wound up | 12 |
| Fourth | Bankruptcy category and Operation must be closed | 6 |
| Total | | 38 |

According to our above categorization eight banks in the First Category are commercially fit to run and operate banking business. Bangladesh bank may ask the 12 banks listed in Second Category to merge with First Category or go for voluntary liquidation after satisfactorily meeting the demand of the depositors and other creditors. Bangladesh Bank may also cancel the banking licenses of 12 banks in Third Category and ask them to go for voluntary liquidation after meeting all obligations and dues to all depositors and creditors.

It is the moral obligation and also legal authority of Bangladesh Bank to cancel banking licenses of all six banks in Fourth Category. Such Banks have no justified legal rights to operate any banking business inside and outside Bangladesh. Bangladesh Bank must ask the Board of Directors of these banks to go for immediate voluntary liquidation after meeting their legal obligation to

their depositors and creditors.

The Banks in First Category must extend their banking services to the rural Bangladesh at least up to Upazila level. They should go for extensive Mobile Banking Operation in rural area provided they have developed the secured and tested online and mobile net work.

At present four government banks namely Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Rupali Banks operate in the country but they do not have any computer network and knowhow. Although some Banks have computers in their Offices, they do most of the banking jobs on manual basis. They employ a large number of unnecessary employees.

Bangladesh Bank must make proper investigation and analyses into these four banks. If these banks meet the criteria of First Category of private banks, then two out of four government banks may operate independently. Otherwise, they must follow the Rule of Liquidation like private banks. Ansar-VDP Bank, Expatriate Bank like government banks should be merged with government banks.

Further, is there any justification of Krisi Banks to operate in cities and towns? If there is any necessity of such banks, they must operate at Upazila and Union level only. In fact, their functions can be carried out by the First Category of Banks.

If the number of private and government banks is limited according to the above suggestions, Bangladesh Bank can easily monitor, direct and control all banks in the most effective manner.

Bank scams mainly happens due to the mismanagement and corrupt practices of Board of Directors of banks. Most of them are appointed politically. The Appointment or selection of directors must be delegated to Bangladesh Bank and according to Banking Laws. The Rule for appointing the Directors in all types of banks may be made in the following manner:

The total number of directors in any private or government bank must not exceed 15. Out of 15 directors, Bangladesh Bank must nominate 8 directors and 7 others will be selected from public shareholders. The CEO must be the Chairman of the Board of Directors. The CEO must be a professionally qualified person with sufficient banking experience. No important decision of the bank cannot be approved without 2/3 votes of the full Board. The Chairman will preside over the meeting and can give his view on the issue but he must not have any power to cast his vote in the meeting of the board. Duration of the board may be a period of four years and subject to the provisions of Banking Companies Act and also Companies Act.

The writer is a retired Chartered Accountant. Email: mhoss53268@aol.com.

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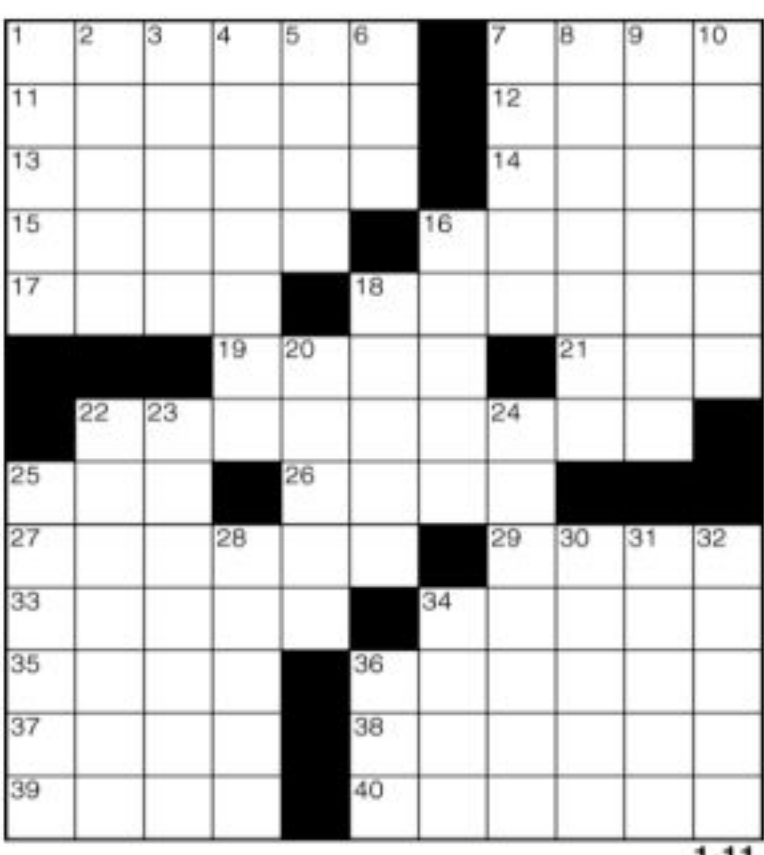
CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

- 1 Trembling
- 7 Hay's place
- 11 Get by
- 12 Diva's piece
- 13 Halloween hue
- 14 Tabloid fodder
- 15 Works hard
- 16 Produce
- 17 Lohengrin's love
- 18 Last number
- 19 Bridge cost
- 21 Soviet space station
- 22 Book subtitled "There and Back Again"
- 25 Overly
- 26 London lockup
- 27 Asimov book
- 29 Tex. neighbor
- 33 Stopped
- 34 Musical sounds
- 35 Sandbox toy
- 36 Eye in awe
- 37 Creative germ
- 38 Comfortable
- 39 Inquisitive
- 40 Pantry

DOWN

- 1 Struck down, in the Bible
- 2 Winter air
- 3 Writer Nin
- 4 Was behind schedule
- 5 Quiche base
- 6 Scottish river
- 7 Burdened
- 8 Folding skill
- 9 Like a log cabin in winter
- 10 Shred
- 16 Hero of 22-Across
- 18 Parade sight
- 20 George Burns film
- 22 Transport to Oz
- 23 Some sweat-shirts
- 24 Short fly ball
- 25 Cufflinks' kin
- 28 Hold, at sea
- 30 Massage
- 31 Flat form
- 32 Showy flower
- 34 "Toodlee!"
- 36 Lass



CRYPTOQUOTE

HOCWI BMS IZEL Z RCOYE, IPLY IPL RCOYE IZELW Z RCOYE, IPLY IPL RCOYE IZELW BMS

- H. WFMII HOIJTLCZVR

Yesterday's Cryptoquote:

One cool judgment is worth a thousand hasty counsels. The thing to do is to supply light and not heat.

- Woodrow Wilson.

Yesterday's answer



A XYDLBAAXR IS LONGFELLOW

One 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.

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



HENRY

by Don Trachte



Winners are not those who never fail, but those who never quit.

Edwin Louis Cole