

# Hasina, Khaleda failed, Raushan made a difference?

SHAKHAWAT LITON

THE entire democratic world may keep pointing out the flaws in the January 5 parliamentary election that bulldozed people's voting rights, but Sheikh Hasina has no other alternative but to vehemently defend and laud that election regardless of its flaws. The reason is simple and crystal clear. That election has made her prime minister once again. And it was the easiest way for her to return to power without any break and without defeating any challenger. So, there is nothing unusual if she defends the election that was held amid a boycott by the BNP-led opposition alliance. She did the same on Sunday on the Parliament's floor while giving her valedictory speech at the 4th session of the current Jatiya Sangsad.

Some of the remarks she made in her speech are significant, and are not expected of any true democrat. While lauding the role of the main opposition party led by Raushan Ershad, she claimed that the opposition in the current parliament has taken the "right democratic and institutional shape." Everybody knows how this main opposition was created by Sheikh Hasina through the one-sided January 5 parliamentary election. The main opposition has also set an unprecedented record in the modern history of world parliamentary democracy by allowing some of its MPs to join the cabinet. This has in fact bulldozed democratic norms and values. In parliamentary democracy, the main opposition can in no way join the government. But the Jatiya Party has become the exception. Its chief, H.M. Ershad, a deposed military

dictator, has been appointed special envoy to the prime minister with status of a minister. All these make a mockery of democracy.

If the main opposition has really taken the "right democratic and institutional shape" as claimed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, this practice should be followed more vigorously in future to make our democracy a model! What needs to be done in future? A political party, more loyal to the government, needs to be made the main opposition in parliament? More

words in the House, but this is not the full story. Hasina's party Awami League cannot avoid the responsibility of some of its MPs who locked horns with BNP MPs to trade vulgar and abusive words on many occasions. But unfortunately, Sheikh Hasina, who was also the leader of the House in the last parliament, did not take any effective step to stop the practice of using abusive words in parliament.

Sheikh Hasina has now been lauding the main opposition Jatiya Party MPs for their role in parliament. In her

bal attack on the government for any of its activities or failure to perform. Therefore, the atmosphere in the House was always calm in absence of heated debates and discussions. For example, Opposition Leader Raushan Ershad spoke in the parliament prior to the prime minister's speech. In her speech, Raushan praised Hasina for taking the country towards prosperity. "The country has moved forward for quite a long time as you [Hasina] have the quality," said Raushan, who is supposed to lead a shadow cabinet to oversee the functions of the Hasina-led government.

Thus, the proceedings in the current parliament have largely been dull. When the parliament is in session, it has sometimes been difficult to find any report on the parliament proceedings in the daily newspapers! Newspapers and private television channels also refrain from giving importance to the parliament proceedings. Is this a healthy sign for the growth of democracy? Is our democracy taking institutional shape?

However, none should take Hasina's remarks lightly that the main opposition in the current parliament has taken "right democratic and institutional shape." If her remark is correct, this is an achievement for our parliamentary democracy. And Raushan Ershad deserves the credit for it. She has made a difference! Hasina and Khaleda Zia, who each were opposition leader twice since 1991, failed to convince the main opposition to take "right democratic and institutional shape" and to make their respective parties into "real opposition"!

The writer is Senior Reporter, The Daily Star.

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MPs need to get unelected in future elections? All the 300 parliamentary seats should be uncontested? Are all these measures required to further strengthen the "right democratic and institutional shape" of the main opposition in parliament?

The prime minister in her speech said the BNP used abusive words and behaved indecently on the parliament floor in the last Jatiya Sangsad between 2009-2013. By saying this, the premier put all the blame on the BNP. It's true some of the BNP's MP used vulgar

words, the Jatiya Party has been discharging the duties of a "real opposition" as it was the job of the opposition to point out the mistakes of the government, which the opposition had been doing. Her remarks indicate that the premier is satisfied with the performance of the main opposition in parliament. The situation in the current parliament is different than previous parliaments with either AL or BNP in the opposition bench. The main opposition MPs in the current parliament have hardly launched a collective ver-

# A bus rider's response...

ALYSON HAYES

AN article, titled "Chaos all around," published in The Daily Star on December 1 caught my attention.

I applaud the media for giving focus on recent traffic-related issues and tragedies. Just in the past month we learned of a rickshaw being knocked down by a bus travelling on the wrong side of the road, resulting in death; a journalist killed while alighting from a bus; a boy who fell from a moving bus being saved; and a pilot project to discourage jaywalking. Yet, these articles do not shed light on the full scope of this "chaos." The behaviour and actions contributing to the current state of Dhaka roadways need deeper exploration.

The traffic situation in Dhaka is terrible but it can be improved. There are signal lights in many intersections, but it is still the police who control the flow of traffic. The police do an exemplary job in managing the bottleneck. But they must also be active in regulating traffic movement, not just the passing of vehicles through intersections, to alleviate the jams. In order to remove this chaos there must be strict adherence to systematic traffic flows with lane designations; enforcement of policies and regulations against unsafe driving, which includes dangerous lane changes and driving down the wrong side; and concern for pedestrians and non-motorised vehicles.

A plan to stop jaywalking is being implemented, but will probably fail. Why? Because jaywalking in Dhaka is a complicated and multifaceted offense. People cross at non-designated intervals for convenience, but there is no break in traffic to allow for safe crossing even at intersections and crosswalks. It can be seen that one point in an intersection will have continuous traffic flow, preventing safe crossing. Jaywalking is not only a matter of



convenient crossing in Dhaka; in many cases it is safer. Crossing in the middle of the road instead of at intersections allows for more dispersed oncoming traffic which is more easily dodged. Crossing at intersections means more congested traffic, illegal U-turning vehicles, and traffic on the wrong side and on the blind side of the pedestrian.

As someone who uses the bus and/or tempo on a daily basis here in Dhaka, I get firsthand insight into the so-called "chaos" of the bus system. Knocks, stumbles, competition, and outright intentional hits are not uncommon. Time is money for the conductors and driver, and stopping is often a difficult endeavour or a costly one. It can be difficult because the riders often demand to be let down at places that are not designated as stops; therefore, giving the driver little option

to come to a complete stop for risk of holding up traffic or, worse, being hit from behind. The stops that do exist are not fit for the purpose. They are small, congested, and often in an active traffic lane; or become an active traffic lane, like in Farmgate where cars hope to move ahead a few spaces in the traffic line by using the bus stoppage lane.

In order to reduce accidents we must work together. Riders must be more cautious of their safety and demand stops at designated stoppage points, rather than just anywhere along the route for convenience. The drivers and conductors must have higher safety standards and also stop only at designated stops. Vehicles around buses must be more aware of the bus traffic and yield to them. Buses are critical to the movement of people and to the

economy in Dhaka. According to Buet, buses carry 77% of the commuting population while only making up 10% of vehicle mix in the roadways. The infrastructure of the bus system must be improved and better stoppage points constructed so that they do not interfere with moving traffic. The bus system in Dhaka clearly needs to be improved in many structural ways, but low-cost changes in behaviour and action can be implemented immediately to improve the safety and comfort of the bus transport system. Improved public transport in terms of safety, comfort, and efficiency can and will encourage more public transport users, which will reduce overall traffic congestion in Dhaka.

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# No time for another COPENHAGEN

## POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



SALEEMUL HUQ

THE twentieth Conference of the Parties (COP20) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to be held in Lima, Peru over the next twelve days, marks well over two decades of global negotiations to tackle the problem of human induced climate change. Significantly for me, it is also the twentieth time I will be attending a COP; each time I go with hope for a significant agreement -- a hope which is sometimes fulfilled and sometimes not. My involvement in the annual negotiations is through the Group of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) representing nearly fifty of the world's poorest countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and a few in Asia. It is from their perspective that I will share some thoughts about the upcoming negotiations to be held in Lima and Paris.

In my 20 years of attending COPs, the biggest disappointment for me, and many others, was COP15 in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009. That conference ended in disarray and failed to agree a new protocol to replace and supersede the Kyoto Protocol, which was agreed in COP3 in 1997. After that debacle, I returned to my country, Bangladesh, and set up a new International Centre for Climate Change and Development based at the Independent University, Bangladesh. There, I decided to focus on training the next generation of students, not just from Bangladesh but also from other developing and some developed countries. And even though Bangladesh is poor and vulnerable to climate change impacts, it is now rapidly transforming itself into one of the most adaptive countries. So Bangladesh is really at the coal-face of tackling the reality of human induced changes.

So as we go forward with another attempt at achieving that new agreement at COP21 in Paris next December, I have a renewed sense of optimism due to a number of factors having changed since Copenhagen.

The first big difference is that we are no longer trying to wrap every little thing into one big package deal. The philosophy then was "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed." Since everything was not agreed, nothing was achieved despite the heads of government of all the key nations rolling up their sleeves and negotiating with each other in person.

The second reason for my optimism is that now China and the US are positively engaged in climate change negotiations. The failure in Copenhagen was, in part, due to the impasse between the world's two biggest emitters of greenhouse gases. Each was accusing the other of recalcitrance, which served only to stall the talks.

The recent joint statement from President Obama and President Xi in Beijing has reversed that impasse and we now have China and the US working in tandem to tackle climate change.

The third reason for greater optimism is the recent set of pledges to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), which has passed nine billion dollars; importantly, with a significant contribution from the US. In addition, China has announced a significant new fund to support South-South cooperation on climate change.

My final reason is that President Obama has made climate change a defining issue for his final term in office. With the strong support of Secretary of State Kerry, it represents a significant change in the US Federal Government's attitude to getting a global agreement in Lima and Paris.

However, despite all this optimism, there are also several factors from the perspective of the LDCs that dampen that hope.

The first is the fact that despite the excellent promises to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases made by the US, China and other countries, when added together, these commitments mean we are still heading towards nearly 4°C of global warming. In order to reach 2°C, which is what all countries have agreed to aim for, the levels of mitigation actions will have to be much more ambitious.

The second factor is the allocation of funding from the developed countries for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries. At the moment, the ratio is 90/10 in favour of mitigation in the larger developing countries such as China, India, Brazil and Indonesia. The LDC Group, and other vulnerable developing countries, will be negotiating for a 50/50 ratio between mitigation and adaptation, with the latter focused on the poorest and most vulnerable developing countries. My expectation then from Lima is that the positive momentum generated from the UN Secretary General's Climate Summit in New York in September, together with the factors mentioned, will result in significant and positive outcomes in Lima over these next few days, which will then continue to Paris in December 2015.

Whatever the outcome at COP20, the reality in Bangladesh and other Least Developed Countries is that adverse impacts of climate change are already occurring and need to be tackled -- with or without a global agreement. We don't have time for another Copenhagen.

The writer is the Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development at the Independent University, Bangladesh.

**QUOTABLE Quote**

Clouds come floating into my life, no longer to carry rain or usher storm, but to add color to my sunset sky.

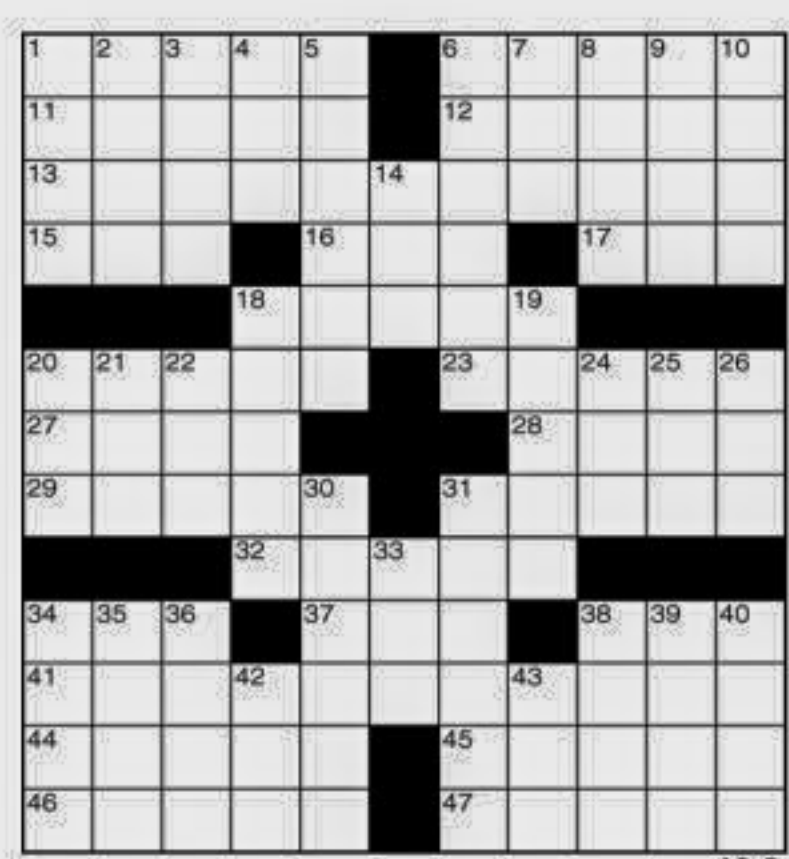
**Rabindranath Tagore**

## CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- ACROSS**

  - 1 Belt setting
  - 6 Move like a baby
  - 11 Irritate
  - 12 Vietnam city
  - 13 Winter sidewalk clearers
  - 15 Signing need
  - 16 Ventilator
  - 17 Soggy
  - 18 Speedy
  - 20 Jack Sparr's restriction
  - 23 Message from the boss
  - 27 Finished
  - 28 Inside picture
  - 29 Stuns
  - 31 Analyze grammar
  - 32 Iberian nation
  - 34 Bowler, for one
  - 37 Possess
  - 38 Letter after sigma
  - 41 Conversation starters
  - 44 Swindle
  - 45 Hint of color
  - 46 Singer Rogers
  - 47 Flexible conjunction
- DOWN**

  - 1 Hornet's kin
  - 2 Writer Rice
  - 3 A party to
  - 4 Boar's mate
  - 5 Romeo kills him
  - 6 To-do list items
  - 7 Uncooked
  - 8 Over again
  - 9 Had on
  - 10 Shopping aid
  - 14 Tell tales
  - 18 Airline prices
  - 19 Dallas native
  - 20 Silent approval
  - 21 Egg cells
  - 22 Turkish topper
  - 24 Mess up
  - 25 Rural mothers
  - 26 Pupil's place
  - 30 Sleek and stylish
  - 31 Candy-filled target
  - 33 Really impress
  - 34 Yoke
  - 35 Dull pain
  - 36 Freshman, usually
  - 38 Watch over
  - 39 Ben Affleck film
  - 40 Manual reader
  - 42 Prohibit
  - 43 Family



## Yesterday's answer

REBA AGED  
RERAN TAXES  
AVERT EPOCH  
DECKED TRE  
ARTS EDDIED  
RES SCARCE  
ROOMY  
DROIDS NUN  
FEEBLE SINE  
ACT DECADE  
SEINE RACED  
TINES ALIAS  
TABS SEND

**CRYPTOQUOTE**  
HB JAME SXHAPK FECSXC S ZCRSFI XLSX  
HPKTHECK AXLCEK XA UECSI IAC, ZCSEP  
IAEC, UA IAC SPU GCFAIC IAEC, XLCP JAM SEC  
SP COFCZCPX ZCSUCE. - UAZJ TSEXAP

**Yesterday's CRYPTOQUOTE:**  
YOU DO NOT LEAD BY HITTING PEOPLE OVER THE HEAD - THAT'S ASSAULT, NOT LEADERSHIP. - DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

## BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



## HENRY

by Don Trachte

