

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
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Union Parishad election

Take all steps to make it free, fair and peaceful

THE Union Parishad election that is slated to start next week is crucial for us on many counts. This is for the first time polls are going to be held along partisan lines, which will measure the popular support of the political parties, particularly the party in power. Given the nature of our polity, it is understandable that there would be attempts to influence the course of the polls. These make the job of holding a free and fair election a daunting task. More importantly, at stake is the credibility of the Election Commission (EC) after its conducting of some of the previous local body elections.

The Election Commissioners, on several occasions, have promised zero tolerance for trouble mongers, and the CEC has even declared to go the whole hog to maintain peace. Yet, the nomination-filing process was fraught with allegations of violence and irregularities. Many BNP-nominated candidates and AL's rebel aspirants had, allegedly, been obstructed from submitting nomination papers.

It is a small wonder that the number of UP Chairmen elected unopposed is considerable. If this trend is allowed to continue, there are reasons to believe that law and order might worsen during the polls. We believe it is incumbent upon the political parties to chastise the rogue elements under their fold. Also, the EC must not shy away from taking action against the trouble mongers. The EC's pro-active role is necessary for a credible election.

JU hall at risk of collapse

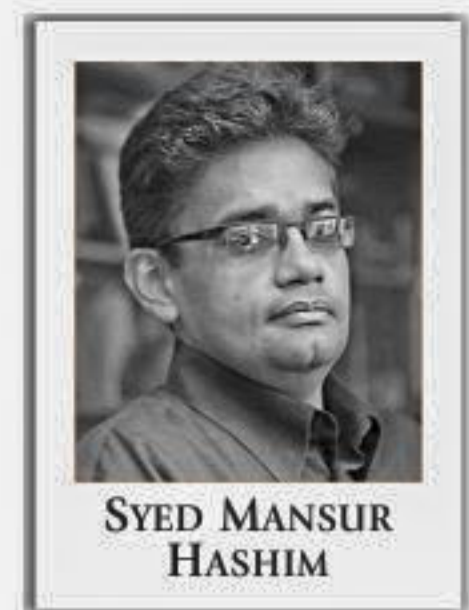
Why have the authorities ignored the danger?

AROUND 200 students of Jahangirnagar University are living in fear that the dorm they live in might collapse on them at any time. Large cracks formed after the January 4 earthquake, have been left unattended, making the damaged extension of Al Beruni Hall ominously vulnerable. It is beyond comprehension why the university authorities have not bothered to ensure the necessary repairs to make it safe again. On the contrary, despite their assurances of either repairing the hall or evacuating the students, the authorities have chosen to ignore the warning signs of a possible disaster in the future.

Lack of funding has been cited by the chief engineer of the university for this gross inaction. This is unacceptable when the lives of staff and students living in this risky building, are at stake. What could be more important than ensuring the safety of students and staff? If there were fund constraints why have the authorities not taken steps to procure them from the relevant ministry for an emergency situation as this? This paper reported on January 6, the formation of around 40 cracks in the building. Till date no measures have been taken, leaving the lives of its residents in a precarious state. We are eerily reminded of the 1985 building collapse of Jagannath Hall that killed 39 students. The tragedy occurred because the authorities did not pay heed to the students' concerns regarding the cracks in the building formed after an earthquake that were left unrepaired.

The Jahangirnagar University's administration should first evacuate the students and staff living in the building and then take the necessary maintenance measures to make the building safe again.

Paying the price of the ban



SYED MANSUR HASHIM

It is understandable that the Bangladesh Garments' Manufacturers Association (BGMEA) is up in arms with regards to the impending ban on air cargo shipped from Bangladesh by the United Kingdom (UK) should we fail to improve security measures at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) by March 31. While we are informed that steps are being taken on our side with regards to procuring Tk. 900 million to purchase modern security screening equipment, training and hiring of technicians and dedicated personnel, all this comes a little too late. That we have not taken lessons from the December 2015 ban by Australia to ship air cargo to that country is all too plain.

The ban has not come out of the blue. The European Union (EU) regulations that were put into effect as of July 1, 2014, states that all air cargo or mail carriers flying to the EU from any third country (ACC3s) must be physically screened to meet EU-approved aviation security. Only those air carriers that comply with ACC3 standards would be allowed to cargo into the EU. These new regulations came into effect due to the presence and detection of two improvised explosive devices that had been shipped as air cargo from airports in the Middle East in 2010, and basically redefined threat level assessments in the EU. So now, all airlines carrying cargo between Bangladesh and the UK, even those getting to the UK through indirect flights, have to be re-screened before reaching Great Britain.

All this is of course bad news for readymade garments (RMG) exporters. With UK being the second largest apparel export destination after Germany in the common market, and a net value

of US\$3 billion coming from the UK in the last fiscal, a ban now means the rerouting of cargo through Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand and Dubai. With exporters already reeling with the Australian decision, the latest ban from UK has far reaching consequences. Indeed, if we go by what information has been made available by Agility Emerging Markets Logistics Index 2016,

tonnes of goods to the EU. RMG constitutes 90 percent of our total exports and of that 10 to 15 percent is air-shipped to Europe and the United States with the UK serving as the hub.

While our authorities have termed the ban "unexpected", that is not exactly true, given that the new regulations have been in effect for some time now. There is simply no way to underestimate the

left high and dry. Procurement of requisite equipment is one thing, getting professionals and technicians up to date operating those equipment, putting into operation an elaborate security regime that lives up to international standards, is another thing altogether.

There is talk of hiring a foreign company to oversee security management. Given that we are a little short on choices, whatever terms set forth by UK will have to be met. But why did we not take measures at the end of last year when the Australian ban came into effect? Why is it that we must react only when a crisis hits us? Had the plans for security equipment procurement been fast tracked then, perhaps we could have avoided this dilemma today. But no, business was left to go on as usual. And now we have been handed down a very long list of security loopholes ranging from "shortage of cargo scanning machines, shortage of skilled manpower, and lack of screeners to operate the scanning machines."

Hence, our proposals for "short-term" contingencies have not really been discussed or even looked at, rather mid to long-term solutions are being sought. Indeed, going by what has been printed in this paper, the UK civil aviation authorities due to visit shortly has already suggested a preferred security company that could manage the situation at HSIA once Bangladesh formally signs an agreement with it. We have actually maneuvered ourselves into a corner and must now count the price for inaction over the last quarter. But it is a price that has to be paid because we simply cannot afford to jeopardise our exports to the UK and beyond. What we can do is take some of those recommendations to implement a sustained capacity building programme so that Bangladesh does not have to remain dependent on a foreign company to ensure safety and security in the long run.

The writer is Assistant Editor, The Daily Star.

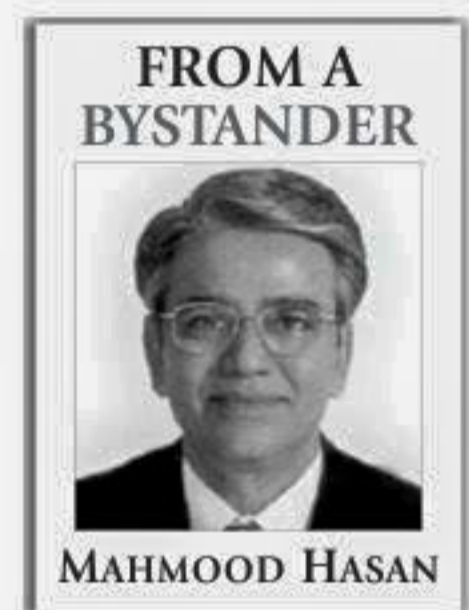


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air exports from Bangladesh to the EU are among the top 20 fastest-growing air cargo trade lanes of 'emerging markets'. The air cargo growth rate year-to-year stands at a little above 7 percent and Bangladesh air lifted some 64,000

decision by the UK government which is looking into the airport security situation at HSIA on behalf of the EU. And with March 31 a mere two weeks away to meet "almost all" the security requirements, we are concerned that Bangladesh will be

GOP desperate to derail Donald Trump



FROM A BYSTANDER
MAHMOOD HASAN

THE campaign to win the nomination for the US presidential election has become nasty. It has degenerated into vulgar name calling, particularly among the Republican Party candidates. The marathon campaign that began around July 2015 is reaching its climax, as the Party convention nears. The Grand Old Party (GOP), i.e. the Republican Party convention is scheduled for July 18-21, 2016 in Ohio and the Democratic Party Convention will be held from July 25-28, 2016 in Philadelphia.

Both the Democrats and the Republican candidates are in a fight to win the nomination. As is the case in all countries during elections, the American polity is deeply divided now.

The Republican Party campaign started off with 17 candidates, and as of March 10, 2016, still has four strong candidates - with billionaire Donald Trump (69) leading the polls, Florida Senator Marco Rubio (44), Texas Senator Edward "Ted" Cruz (45), and Ohio Governor John Kasich (63).

The Democratic Party is in a better position with only two candidates - charismatic former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (68), the ultimate insider of the establishment who has a commanding lead over Vermont's Jewish Senator Bernie Sanders (74). If Hillary Clinton wins, it will be the first time in American history that a woman will occupy the Oval Office as president.

What is most extraordinary is the phenomenal popularity of billionaire businessman Donald Trump. Trump's popularity is seen as an indictment against the Democrats as well as against the current leadership of the Republican Party. Hardcore Conservative party workers think that Democratic President Barack Obama's eight years were a "disaster". Conservative voters also think that the current Republican leaders in Washington have failed to deliver on their promises and have compromised

with the Democrats. Clearly, there is revolt within the GOP and mutineers want change in the GOP establishment.

Trump has been harping with radical half-baked populist issues that resonate among prejudiced people. White angry men without job security form Trump's support base. He has divided America along religious and racial lines with his bigotry and demagoguery. His invectives against Muslims, talks of building a wall along Mexico to stop illegal immigration, bringing back jobs from China, rescinding Obamacare, balancing America's deficit budget, making the American military the strongest in the world and white supremacy - find instant approval from the far Right. Trump has used media debates to belittle his party challengers. He has shown unbelievable animosity towards them and liberally attacked them with vulgar insults.

Trump's popularity has shaken and deeply divided the Republican Party establishment. Neocon Republicans are in a quandary over how to stop the Trump juggernaut. Republican elites fear that this outsider will hijack the Conservative party and demolish its core values. Besides, the leaders' biggest fear is that if Trump is nominated as the Republican candidate at the Party convention, then GOP will lose the White House to Hillary Clinton.

Interestingly, according to opinion polls, Trump cannot win against Hillary Clinton. And Hillary cannot win against Ted Cruz. The irony is that Trump is way ahead of Cruz and may win the Party nomination.

Though Trump draws large crowds, his rallies in different cities have seen raucous protests. An anti-Trump movement is underway to stop the arrogant front-runner. On March 3, 2016, the 2012 Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney in a scathing speech demolished Donald Trump calling him a "phony" and "fraud", and arguing that he "lacks the temperament to be president of America". Romney has called for nominating any candidate other than Donald Trump. The dilemma for the Republicans is: should they stand by the outsider Trump or ditch him? Can they really overturn the Party convention decision?

The problem is that party leaders have no say at the party convention about who will be the presidential nominee. The nominee will be decided by the party delegates coming from all over the country. The delegates are independent and not under the command or influence of any party leader. The Republican Party has 2,472 delegates, representing all the 50 states. Among the four candidates, whoever secures the support of at least 1,237 delegates (simple majority) will become the party nominee for the presidential race.

To throw Donald Trump out of the race, Conservatives have been calling for a "contested convention". That is, when no single candidate secures the support of majority of the delegates at the convention, the nomination is decided through a process of horse trading and additional re-votes when delegates can change their support of a candidate. This is the time when senior leaders can probably influence the decision making. Trump thinks he will gain a "knockout", i.e. get more than the simple majority at the convention.

The campaign for nomination is an interesting circus at play, which is essentially fought over the electronic media and focuses closely on the hullabaloo created by Trump. Candidates extensively use social media to promote their profile and rebut criticisms. An aggregate \$4.4 billion will be spent on TV ads by the candidates to convince voters and criticise opponents.

The American presidential election is a complex process in which the president is elected not by direct votes but through an electoral college. It is touted as a democratic process. But the deficit shows when the process is frequently sullied by uncivil and indecent language and unfair tactics.

The campaign, described by many as one of the dirtiest, is currently dominated by the controversial rhetoric raised by Donald Trump. It will be interesting to see whether Republican leaders succeed in containing Donald Trump or succumb to his strategy.

The writer is former Ambassador and Secretary.

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COMMENTS

"Poet who bled rage, hymned love passes away"
(March 13, 2016)

Joyoti

We have lost a great poet and freedom fighter. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

"Fallout worries exporters"
(March 12, 2016)

Anando Roy

UK's recent ban on direct cargo from Dhaka to London will threaten our export. The government must take immediate measures in this regard.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

End brutality against children

In recent years, torturing and killing children has become an everyday affair. Children are being tortured in brutal ways which is unacceptable in a civilised society. Degradation of social values, lack of moral teaching, rampant corruption, dirty national politics, cultural aggression, etc., are the major reasons behind this.

It is high time we looked into this matter seriously and ensure a healthy environment for our children. It is our duty to raise our voice against child abuse.

Solaiman Hossain
Assistant Teacher (English)
Civil Aviation High School, Tejgaon, Dhaka

Best of luck for the T20 World Cup

The recently concluded Asia Cup has proved that we have improved a lot in the T20 format. The knock of Shabbir Rahman was brilliant against the Lankans and it was the turning point of that match. Mahmudullah Riyadh turned out to be a great finisher in this format. Much credit goes to our captain Mashrafe and coach Chandika Hathursingha, under whose leadership and guidance we have been improving continuously. We pray that Bangladesh will do even better in the T20 World Cup.

Kowsar Rahman Sadit
Uttara, Dhaka



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Encounter of an unsporting kind

I am an Indian expatriate working in Bangladesh and was present at the stadium gallery during the Asia Cup T20 final match. I observed with sadness that many Bangladeshi supporters were frequently ridiculing the Indian cricket team. They also hurled abusive language to the players. It is very unfair and rude on part of a cricket-loving nation like Bangladesh.

Anjan
On e-mail