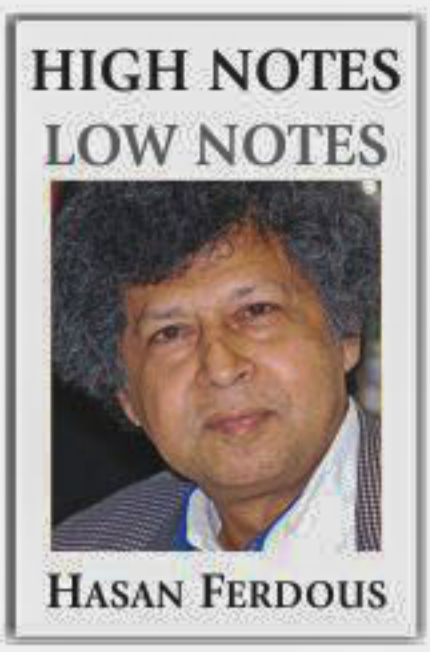


# Exercise in democracy or "Bolirkhela"?



**HIGH NOTES  
LOW NOTES**  
HASAN FERDOUS

IMAGINE two heavyset men in the middle of a mud pool lunging at each other. They huff and puff, throw up their arms in the air screaming obscenities – some in earnest, some to stir their supporters. Finally, after repeated frontal assaults, one of them puts the other down and claims the trophy, sending his supporters into a frenzy. This in Chittagong is known as *Bolirkhela*. Now imagine an overweight man – about 6 feet 3 inches tall weighing about 236 pounds – and a smaller 5 feet 6 inches woman weighing about 136 pounds – in the same mud pool, though without any actual mud. They too are fighting for a trophy – a much bigger trophy. As they lunge at each other, they huff and puff, spewing a stream of invectives. The man turns to the woman and calls her nasty; she in disgust calls him horrifying. This goes on back and forth for ninety minutes, relenting only when the closing bell rings ding dong. They climb out of the ring, each claiming victory over the other. I did the best, one says. No, I did the best, the other shouts back. The crowd goes home and waits for the next round. This, in the United States, is known as an exercise in democracy. Seriously, what is going in the United States, is nothing less than our very own BolirKhela, except it is so nasty one has to keep children away lest they get curious about groping body parts and other favourite pastimes of the Republican candidate. The two leading candidates – Hillary Clinton on the Democratic side and Donald Trump on the Republican – have moved heaven and earth in their search for the choicest words. Just consider the following that they have used to describe each other: Donald Trump: Crooked, dishonest, liar, fraud, disgraceful, nasty, puppet Hillary Clinton: prejudiced, racist, hate monger, bigot, white supremacist

Neither of them seems able to mention their opponent without an accompanying epithet. For Trump, it is always "crooked Hillary." For Hillary, her opponent is always "a hate monger" and "bigoted." Clearly, Mr. Trump has a bigger collection and is more generous with their use. He also gets a kick out of mocking his opponents, whether it is Hillary or a nosey disabled journalist, belittling them every which way possible. Having exhausted all the invectives in his quiver, Donald Trump has now decided to give up all pretense of democratic niceties. He may not concede if he loses. This he said on live television, at the much ballyhooed third presidential debate, with more than 72 million people watching the antics wide-eyed. There are massive voter frauds and the mainstream media is out there conspiring with the Hillary camp to steal the election, he claimed. An incredulous Chris Wallace, the moderator of the debate, wanted to make sure the bulky man in the middle had understood the question. We are talking about a cornerstone of America's democracy, he emphasised. Clearly enjoying himself, Mr. Trump conjured up a wicked smile and said, "Well, we will see at the time." Meanwhile, enjoy the suspense. The next day he was in Ohio, clarifying himself. Sure I will accept the election outcome, but only if I win. Thousands of chest thumping people, mostly white and mostly "less educated," screamed, "Amen, Amen!" So, what's really going on? To most Americans, their country is manna from heaven. For years, this country's political leaders have talked about America being "exceptional" and its work – whether selling arms to Saudi Arabia or dropping bombs on poor Vietnamese – God's work. Looking at it now, the "BolirKhela" – of the American variety – does not look much like God's work. As we witness in real time the disintegration of the myth about the greatness of American democracy, people are worrying what will happen once this election is over. The most worrying is the scenario in which an



Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton at the third U.S. presidential debate.

PHOTO: AFP

angry Trump refuses to concede defeat and millions of his marauding followers take to the street threatening violence. The underlying reason for the growing "white anger" is, of course, their political and economic marginalisation. The country is increasingly getting un-white, a prospect deeply resented by the whites who had taken it for granted that they would forever remain in charge. According to US statistics, a majority of Americans would be non-white by 2043. However, if you consider the US population under five, this country is already a non-white majority. According to US census report, by 2015, America's 52.3 per cent children under five were non-whites. This is a reality the whites cannot accept.

Almost eight years ago, when Barack Obama beat all his white competitors to become the country's first black President, it hit the whites for the first time that the country was slipping out of their grip. The reaction was swift and widespread. He was denounced as illegitimate because he was a 'Muslim and foreign-born'. Ann Coulter, a conservative columnist, called Obama a monkey, and Ted Nugent, a singer and songwriter, called him "a subhuman mongrel." That was only *hors devours*, the main course was yet to come. Unsurprisingly, a new political movement was launched called Tea Party, anchored solely on the fear that the country was being "stolen" from them. In 2014, two Princeton

University professors, Christopher Parker and Matt Barreto, published their award-winning book, *Change they Can't Believe In*, where they demonstrated how the Tea Party movement was fueled by White America's firm belief that they needed to take back their country. Donald Trump simply took the idea of a "stolen country" and made it an anthem for a despairing white nation. As we watch the American version of our BolirKhela, one shudders to think how this might end. The next chapter of this nation is yet to be written, but if its people fail to retake their own country from the Trump maniacs, it would truly be lost. The writer is a journalist and author based in New York.

# A strange way to hire teachers!

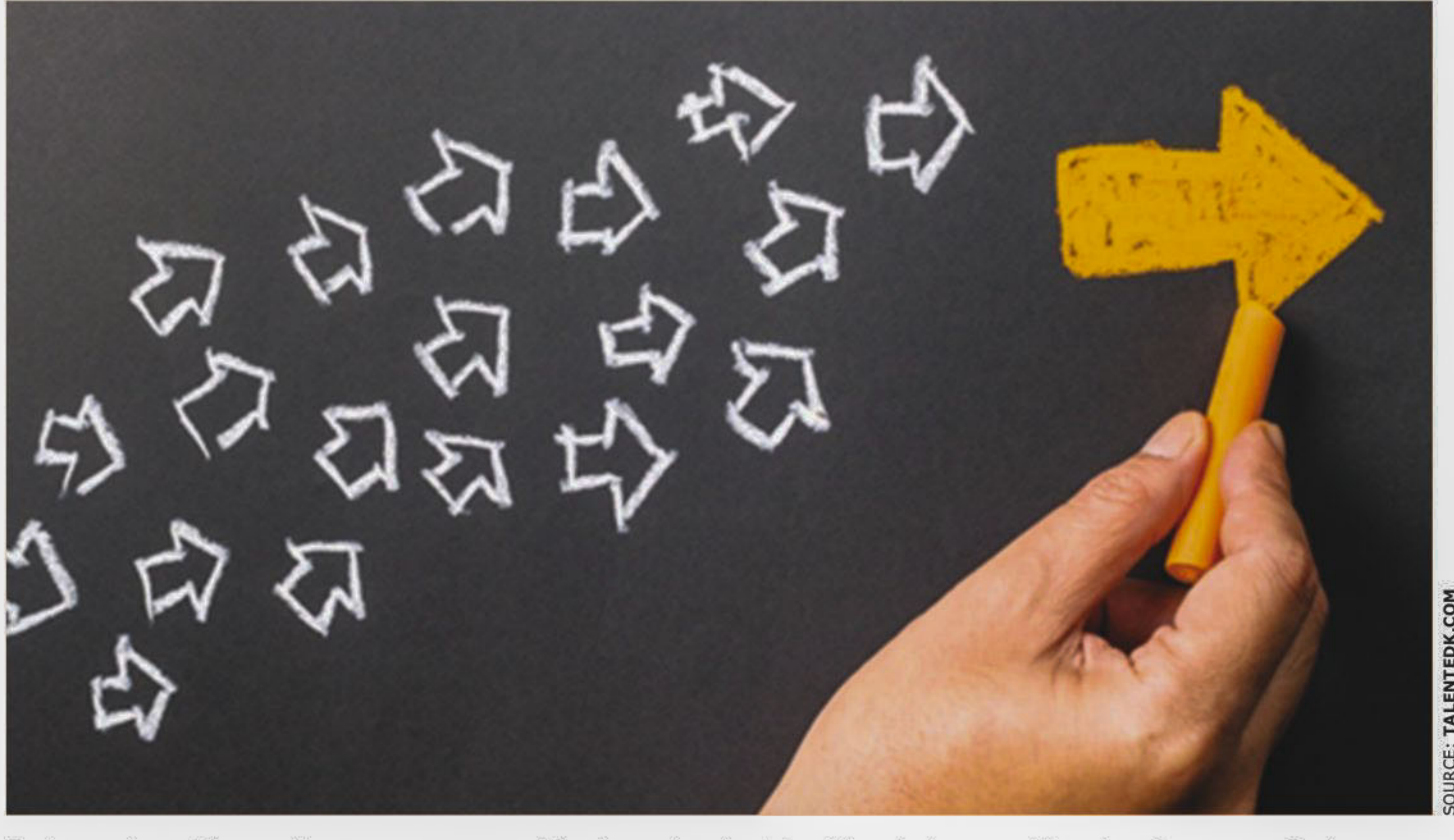
AJM SHAFIUL ALAM BHUIYAN  
A recent directive related to the recruitment of faculty members at public universities had a chilling effect on the universities. Several media reported that the University Grants Commission (UGC) would request the universities to take written tests for hiring faculty members and ask for a police report to testify that the person was not involved in any anti-government activities. These recommendations came from the Ministry of Education because of "malpractices" in faculty recruitments at different universities. Should the public universities adhere to such advice? Let us explore the faculty recruitment process in the country and elsewhere. More or less all public universities follow an elaborate recruitment process similar to that of the University of Dhaka. When there is a vacant position at any department, the position is advertised in daily newspapers and the university website to seek applications for employment from qualified candidates. The Department drafts the advertisement based on its need. In addition to the University's basic requirements for a position, a department can have additional requirements. Usually high CGPAs in all terminal examinations are required for an entry position like lecturer while other conditions need to be fulfilled for higher positions. A board of five or more people including subject experts interviews the candidates to see whether they will be able to teach students. Based on interview performance, the board selects the qualified candidate and places him/her before the Syndicate. The Syndicate appoints him/her to the respective department.

website. Around three candidates are short listed for filling the position. Each short listed candidate is invited for a day. A candidate begins the day with a public presentation on a topic from his/her area of specialisation where faculty members and graduate students ask critical questions. After the presentation, the candidate meets the graduate students and

written tests for hiring faculty members. In Bangladesh, the UGC is pondering to propose written tests. When candidates with high CGPAs can only apply for a university teaching job, why do we need to go for a written test? Didn't the candidates already demonstrate their academic feats by securing high grades? Shouldn't our concern be to test whether they

academic results in student life constitute only one requirement while other prerequisites include teaching ability, approach, likeability and collegiality. Sometimes candidates with high CGPAs are left out because of their poor scores on other areas. However, it cannot be denied that sometimes universities recruit and leave out

the pressure. But these instances are rare at the University of Dhaka. However, if there is any allegation of malpractices in recruitment at any university, the UGC must investigate it and take necessary measures. Written tests will not be able to stop malpractices in recruitment. If the recruitment committee is not committed to maintaining fairness, the committee members will leak out questions to make their preferred candidates stand on top of the list. The issue of police verification for university teachers for anti-government activities suggests that those who came up with this instruction are not knowledgeable about the stature and role of universities. Perhaps, they are thinking about applying the recruitment procedure of the Bangladesh Civil service (BCS) for hiring university teachers. Universities are places where students learn to raise questions about the existing knowledge and the system. Students and faculty members are supposed to think beyond the box and experiment with new ideas. Plurality in terms of opinions and viewpoints should be a cherished ideal at the higher seats of learning. Not only university teachers but also every citizen has the right to criticize the government and hold divergent viewpoints in a democracy. I am afraid that police verification for university teachers for anti-government activities may work as a weapon to control dissent and debate, leading us toward an authoritarian society. Police verification of background should only be necessary for people who will deal with state secrets not individuals who will impart knowledge to young minds. Nowhere in the modern world do governments meddle in university recruitment process because such actions would contravene university autonomy and academic freedom. Nevertheless, the recruitment process needs to be made more rigorous at public universities, arranging public lectures/seminars for candidates and counting this performance in making recruitment decisions. The writer is Professor and Chair of the Department of Television and Film Studies at the University of Dhaka.



SOURCE: TALENTEDK.COM

faculty members of the recruiting Department separately to demonstrate what he/she would contribute to the Department. The day ends with a dinner and with the hiring committee members. Recruitment decisions are made by the hiring committee based on the candidates' seminar performance, likability and collegiality. No university in the modern world takes

would make good teachers? Candidates having the ability to express their ideas candidly and explain things lucidly have the potential to make good teachers. We see media reports claiming malpractices in the hiring process when a candidate with the highest CGPAs is excluded but a candidate with relatively lower CGPAs is recruited. In the selection process,

candidates based on non-academic considerations. When malpractice can happen in faculty recruitment, usually it occurs because of pressure from people who have power and influence. During a selection process, candidates try to lobby with influential persons to manipulate the selection process in their favour. In some cases, the selection committees succumb to

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**ROLAND BARTHES**  
*The Pleasure of the Text*

*I am interested in language because it wounds or seduces me.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- Makes fun of
- Richmond's river
- Love affair
- Singly
- Make a cameo
- "Divine Comedy" writer
- Sense of self
- Unthrifty sort
- Depict
- Verb for you
- Adam's grandson
- Went ahead
- Blinds piece
- Took in
- "The Simpsons" clerk
- Be thrifty
- Amp plug-in
- Sex
- Bar appliance
- Anger
- Judy Jetson's brother
- Makes flat
- Hair tint
- Number unit
- Spirited horse

**DOWN**

- Leaves
- Indy entrant
- Pol's concern
- Metallic element
- Family car, perhaps
- Green stone
- Shepard in space
- Carter's veep
- Came in
- Fume
- Bristles at
- Debate side
- Narc's org.
- Cut off
- "Give me the details!"
- Swiss lake
- Desire
- Yellow hues
- Candle count
- Muralist Rivera
- Bert's pal
- Takes ten
- Rocket part
- Not natural, in a way
- Bookie's charge

**BEETLE BAILEY** by Mort Walker

**BABY BLUES** by Kirkman & Scott

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWER**

REHASH	MOON
ATONCE	UNDO
HANGAR	STEW
SNATCH	
ALOT	ALECK
TEN	WISEMAN
LAT	ANT
ASHE	TRAY
SHEET	IDOS
MASTER	
AWES	ADONIS
CONE	IGNORE
TOUR	LESTAT