

# Nomination cauldron bubbling away, electioneering heat awaited

**PLEASURE IS ALL MINE**



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

IT was for the BNP leaders "a strategy" of filing multiple sets of nomination papers to cover the contingency of rejections. This came in the way of 141 party nominees out of 696 who had applied to the EC for a go-ahead. It appears such a tactic may stand them in good stead after all! But in the eye of Obaidul Quader, the AL secretary general however, this amounted to "nomination business" on the BNP's part.

For all one knows, a scramble sets in for the ticket of a major political party with the result that a combination of "winnability" and how deep the pocket of a candidate is becomes the clincher of a slot. And why not? The explosion of aspirations is understandable—the double to 10 times wealth acquisition over two tenures served by MPs and ministers, even the erstwhile sets of them, regardless of party affiliations bear testimony to a transformative nature of politics. It has become not so much an instrument of public service as that of big business. Interestingly, the RPO-stipulated requirement of grassroots participation in the selection of a panel of candidates for a party high command to choose from has at any rate been side-lined, if it at all resorted to.

Given a high number of nomination-seekers in the opposition BNP—having been elected out of power during 2008-2013 and having missed a full election cycle subsequently—the BNP leadership was extra considerate to the aspirants. Thus, we see them giving nominations in excess of total number of seats. Of course,



**Aspirants, whose nomination papers have been rejected, gather at the Election Commission in Dhaka to appeal against the cancellation for contesting the December 30 election.**

PHOTO: STAR

the rejectionist sweep applied by the returning officers based on an overly cautious attention to detail that included trifle amusing trivialities, left six constituencies without any BNP candidate to contest from.

Nevertheless, BNP is faced with a surplus of nominees topped up by those who might win the appeal to add to 555 nominees who had received EC's clearance. The candidates to be eventually dropped may be frustrated, if not disgruntled.

Another dicey aspect of electoral politics centres on seat-sharing between components of major political alliances being kept close to the chest of the principal party until the last moment! This will hopefully be done once the appeals on rejected nomination applications are disposed of, seat-sharing formulae have been agreed to, withdrawal of excess

nominees have taken place and symbols assigned to the participating parties and contestants.

This arithmetic paradigm of voters makes a wholesome reading. The total number of voters is 10 crore 41 lakh 90 thousand 480. First-time-voters comprise 11.80 percent i.e. one crore 23 lakh. In fact, the number of voters aged 18-28 constitutes 22 percent representing one-fourth of the total electorate. Most of the 23-28 age group did not vote in 2013. In other words, we are looking at 25 million new young voters who will cast their ballot for the first time.

If we divide 25 million new voters by 300 parliamentary constituencies multiplied by five contestants each, 12,000-16,000 new voters will have cast their ballot in the election of a single MP. This means the average is worked out taking into account the differences in the

size of the constituencies.

The vote margin between the winner and the loser in the national elections has been mostly less than 10,000. So with their number ranging from 12,000 to 16,000, the young voters can make a decisive difference in the electoral fortune of a youth-friendly and serving party. They are tech savvy, IT using, supply chain-oriented, globe girdling thinkers raring to compete for excellence. They need research facilities, start-up money, infrastructure and creative environment to blossom.

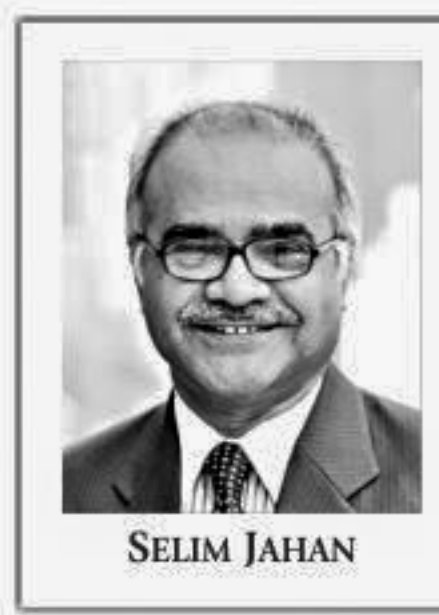
Women voters will have to be nurtured with special campaign promises to raise their status by a tangible recognition of their unpaid work along with income parity and workplace security accorded to them. Quite to the point, their enthusiastic and sizable turnouts at the polling booths are such a huge value addition to the sinews of a participatory democratic system.

As for women candidates for direct election, their number has reached a modicum of respectability reaching 85, all of them having been accepted for the race. The breakdown is interesting: BNP: 33, AL: 18, JP: 8, Independent: 5 and other political parties: 21. It rhymes with the minimalist standard of women representation of 20 percent in the working of political parties.

One final word. The Electoral Inquiry Committee consisting of district level judges is being tasked to oversee 122 constituencies focused on attending to complaints and giving decisions over electoral offences on the ground and so has its job cut out. It will work towards prompt disposal of conflicts without looking up to the headquarters.

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# Violence against women: A zero-tolerance issue



SELIM JAHAN

THE lack of women's empowerment is a critical form of inequality. And while there are many barriers to empowerment, violence against women and girls (VAW) is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality.

Estimates by the World Health Organization

(WHO) indicate that about one in three (35 percent) of women and girls worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. However, these numbers—shocking as they are—only tell a part of the story.

VAW is a global phenomenon that cuts across boundaries of age, socioeconomic status, education and geography. Yet globally we still do not know very much about its extent: only 107 of 195 countries have data available on intimate partner violence for example, a number that falls to just 56 countries when we seek to understand non-intimate partner violence.

Even when data is available, it is likely that the figures are an underestimate as it is notoriously difficult to collect sensitive information on VAW when the victims can fear coming forward or feel ashamed.

VAW also has an impact on the lives of many women beyond the direct victims. The fear of violence can prevent women from pursuing education, working or exercising their political rights and voice. A recent Gallup survey shows that in every region of the world, women consistently feel more insecure than men, although the levels of insecurity significantly vary across regions.

VAW is not only a cause of gender inequality, it is a consequence of it. In many places, gender-based violence is reinforced by discriminatory laws and exclusionary social norms that undermine women and girl's opportunities for education, income and independence.

Sometimes VAW accompanies shifting power relations within households and communities, especially when there is resentment against women who move away from conventional roles.

Today, 49 countries still do not have laws that protect women from domestic violence. In 32 countries the procedures that women face to obtain a passport differ from those of men. In 18 countries women need their husband's approval to take a job.

Practices like early marriage are also widespread, particularly in low human development countries, where 39 percent of women aged 20 to 24 were married before their 18th birthday.

Estimates from the 2015 Human Development Report show that even though women carry out the major share of global work (52 percent), they face disadvantages in both paid and unpaid work.

They perform three times more unpaid work than men—31 percent vs 10 percent—and, when their work is remunerated, they earn 24 percent less than their male counterparts. A professional "glass ceiling" means that women still hold only 22 percent of senior leadership jobs in businesses, and fewer than 25 percent of senior political and judicial positions.

So what next? It is clearly vital to support women and girls who encounter violence, for example ensuring they have access to justice, shelter and protection, whether violence is domestic or in the work place.

But to break the VAW cycle, policy interventions should focus on the longer-term by changing discriminatory social norms; closing gender gaps whether they are educational, economic or social level; or building awareness about VAW.

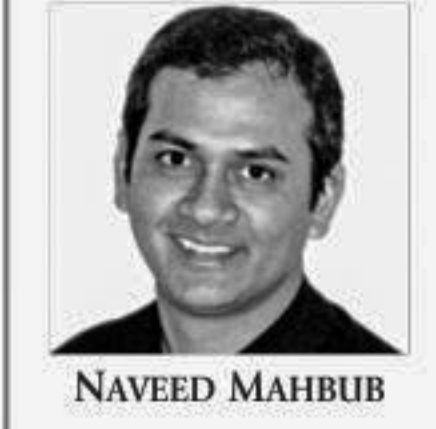
Innovative and aggressive policy that aims to change outcomes (such as increasing women's voice in the community) may change norms. Although norms should guide the design of culturally sensitive policies and programmes, they should not constrain or undermine initiatives.

Progress has been made on many important fronts (e.g. on closing gaps between men and women in primary education and political participation), but there has been inertia and stagnation in others (e.g. employment).

And so much more effort is needed to tackle the patterns of violence that cut deep into many societies so that they are not perpetuated across generations. Collecting more data is an important first step.

Selim Jahan is Director, Human Development Report Office, UNDP.

## HUMOROUSLY YOURS



NAVEED MAHBUB

dose of humour for the soon to be commissioned officers.

The event at the Academy starts at 19:00 military time, not Bangladesh Standard Time. My flight to Chittagong is at 15:10 (I'm already using the 24-hour time format). At 12:00, I receive an MI dispatch: "Start for airport IMMEDIATELY. Unrest in Tongi." It's not from Military Intelligence, but from Marital Intelligence, aka, the wife, which is as accurate, reliable and secure. For she is reporting directly from the field—Airport Road. She is already an hour late for her meeting at the Le Meridien.

With S.E.A.L. speed, I'm on Uber for my 5km ride to Dhaka Airport with a luxurious three hours in hand. Google Map shows plenty of red, but 60 minutes to destination.

14:30. I am 1.5km from the airport and have been so for the last 45 minutes. I take a quick battlefield decision—I pay the Uber driver, put my backpack on, get out of the car and start running decked (no naval pun) up in my suit. A sprinter in a suit is still underdressed compared to an attendee at a Bangladeshi winter picnic, where a rare union of a three-piece (suit), tie, muffler and beret is the dress code...

Just like when you stand in the shortest line at the supermarket checkout point, only to see the other line that you just decided against, starts moving, the traffic also behaves in a similar fashion. Just two

minutes into my sprint, there is a break in the traffic and all vehicles rumble up like at the starting line of a Formula One race. But I also start, by falling into a ditch and hyper-extending my right calf muscle. I sit down on the dusty side walk in excruciating pain. With only 25 minutes to the departure time of my flight, looks like I will be letting the midshipmen down.

The Uber driver pulls over, helps me in, rushes me to the airport and refuses to accept any fare for the unscheduled trip. I

his limp, because the comic gets hurt in Dhaka, because he runs to catch his flight, because he is stuck in traffic for three hours, because some folks in Tongi get into a scuffle, because there is discord for a year, because of an annual event that is all about peace.

But we are a nation where no matter where and when we sneeze, it is expected that the rest of the country will instantly and collectively say "bless you". We are groomed that way. After all, the irate dad



**A man surrounded by his rivals during the clash on the ground.**

PHOTO: ABU BAKAR SIDDIQUE AKAND


force a handsome tip and hobble in to the airport building, just in time to get my boarding pass...

The young Navy lieutenant greeting me at Chittagong Airport notices my limp and makes a beeline for the sick bay at the Naval Academy where the medics take care of business. I'm at my seat at the brand-new auditorium 18:40 sharp. The show goes on and in flying colours.

So, a comedian gets medical attention in Chittagong, because a lieutenant notices

still says to the mortified mom loud and clear in front of the guests at the dinner table: "Why are you pinching me under the table?" To which mom grimaces, and dad further adds with total clarity: "What now? And now why are you narrowing your eyes?" Dad deliberately and embarrassingly plays dumb to the subtle Morse Code message of sparing some of the fried chicken for the guests. At a wedding in its utmost serenity, there is the sudden yelling bout between two

ON THIS DAY  
IN HISTORY



December 7, 1941  
ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR  
Imperial Japanese Navy with 353 planes attack US fleet at Pearl Harbor Naval Base, Hawaii, killing 2,403 people

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Lying

7 Ocean motion

11 Plummer of "Pulp Fiction"

12 Eye part

13 Some limas

15 Speedy

16 Mammal with flippers

18 Harp's kin

21 Swallow sound

22 Skirt folds

24 Paris pal

25 Spring month

26 Twosome

27 Exotic market

29 Bankrolls

30 Jack or joker

31 Royal address

32 Poultry buy

34 Sweet treat

40 Like some wines

41 Broad street

42 Took the bus

43 Bristle at

DOWN

1 Apply ointment

2 Outback bird

3 Purr producer

4 Catch

5 Perfect

6 Diamond cover

7 Make '60s shirts

8 Lyricist Gershwin

9 Big racket

10 Curvy letter

14 Nanny's mate

16 Cashew family tree

17 "My Fair Lady" lady

19 Speed checker

20 Piano piece

21 Yak it up

22 Golf goal

23 Urgent call

25 Sir's counterpart

28 Pinball palace

29 Reacts to a sour note

31 Figure out

33 Dessert fruit

34 Sedan or SUV

35 Before now

36 Stop symbol

37 Common bill

38 Sprint

39 Hoop attachment

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

W	O	R	M	S		D	E	B	I	T
I	D	I	O	T		E	R	A	S	E
T	E	M	P	O		T	A	B	L	E
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BEETLE BAILEY  
BY MORT WALKER





BABY BLUES  
BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



