

The CEC is gone, long live the CEC!

OF MAGIC & MADNESS



BADIUZZAMAN BAY

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The Daily Star.

LET me begin with the story of a thought experiment. I did this experiment with a concept known as perspective-taking. In it, you try to understand things from another person's point of view. You put yourself in their shoes and see their life through their eyes. So, in my little experiment—out of curiosity, and because everyone deserves a little love on Valentine's Day—I put myself in the shoes of our now-retired chief election commissioner.

Here's how I did it: I summoned the energy to wander into his head to understand how he justified doing all that he did since taking up the job. It was a tough sell. But finally, I managed to conjure up five scenarios in which the CEC is not the bad guy, but one whom bad things happen to, thus deserving our pity.

Scenario 1: At the end of his incredibly controversial term at the helm of the most-scrutinised public office in the country, the CEC may think, with the benefit of hindsight, that he was dealt a bad hand. After all, no other CEC had to put up with the third consecutive term of a political government, not least one bent on gaining legitimacy after coming off an uncontested election. He was fated to command a leaky boat. What's remarkable is not that it sank, but that he was on it while it did.

Scenario 2: The CEC can blame his luck for not having a compliant quartet for associates. The blowback he suffered for every mistake he made, for every electoral fraud and violence, for every time he looked the other way while his intervention was sought, would have hurt a lot less if one of his commissioners hadn't blown the trumpet at every opportunity.

Scenario 3: He set a bar below which no CEC can or should aspire to go—something to teach the class of wannabe commissioners. It's a lesson in *teaching* a lesson, but he is seldom credited for this didactic role.

Scenario 4: The CEC may feel that his real power was vastly overestimated, despite what the constitution says. After all, a constitution is only as effective as the executive branch allows it to be.

Scenario 5: The CEC's sense of humour is criminally underrated. Imagine all the times we mistook his deadpan expression for a lack of humour as he defended the integrity of his office against all evidence. We thought he was being serious, and we chided him for that. Joke's on us.

Or imagine his subtlety when he said, "Often, it is seen that someone who extorts money from hawkers in Gulistan later becomes a leader. One day he can be a parliamentarian too." As I speculated elsewhere: Gulistan here is a metaphor for the entire country. The crook in his little parable represents a cross-section of our leaders who can do anything to reach or retain the high seats of power. Could the CEC reveal more without risking saying more?

But perhaps I'm getting ahead of myself. Perhaps he meant none of these, and he has none of the above scenarios playing out in his head. Far from having post-retirement blues, he may feel content. After all, as he suggested in his last media briefing, the success of a CEC should be determined by whether he has conducted all the elections planned, which he did. Merit of the elections be damned.

Incidentally, February 14, 2022 was the last day for our dear departed Election Commission. The stars may not have aligned for this otherwise auspicious day of love and reunion to mark their departure, but it sure brought a certain measure of relief knowing that they are gone. However, them moving out means the next batch of commissioners moving in. The seat of the CEC will not remain

vacant for long.

What kind of a CEC will we get next? Will he be cut from the same cloth as the likes of KM Nurul Huda and Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad, or will he be worthy of his office? Can he do his job even if he wants to? Can the search committee find the most motivated candidates?

scrutinising and selecting anyone from outside." (Prothom Alo, January 23, 2022).

I won't go into a lengthy discussion about this process, or the performances of the past search committees. We have had a prodigious pile of diatribes accumulating over the years, and yet no one bothered. The banality of the effort, just as the futility of our whole democratic/electoral exercise, cannot be resolved overnight.

What I find interesting is how the public is reacting to it. After news came out that about 350 names had been submitted for the posts of CEC and four other election commissioners—in other words, about 70 applications for each post—one Facebook user commented that the commissioner nomination process is now "more competitive than the BCS exam." It's hard to disagree. We're told that some of the candidates submitted their own names to the search committee. Some are reportedly lobbying for the post to the Cabinet Division.

This would be—to rephrase a Stephen Hawking quote—tragic if it weren't funny. What we needed was a sincere effort to have fearless defenders of democracy brought to the Election Commission. What we needed was to create a conducive environment for them to hold free and fair elections by restructuring the electoral process. Instead, what we are getting is a glance into a new generation of candidates inspired by the missionary zeal of KM Nurul Huda and Co.

You don't need a thought experiment to understand their motive.



ILLUSTRATION: BIPLOB CHAKROBORTY

According to retired Justice Abdul Matin of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, who served in several such search committees, the chairman or members of the committee tasked with finding eligible candidates can do very little. Despite their efforts, what happens in the end is that "the Cabinet Division hands over a few envelopes with biographies of some people of the government's choosing. There is no opportunity for

CORRIGENDUM

The headline of an interview of Mahbub Talukdar published by The Daily Star on February 14, 2022 had a typographical error. The correct headline is, "My agenda has been to upload democracy." We sincerely apologise for this mistake.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

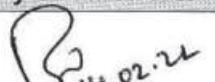
Office of the Line Director
Upazila Health Care (UHC), DGHS
BMRC Bhaban (1st floor), Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.
Phone: 02-222280785, Fax: 02-222282900
E-mail: uhc@id.dghs.gov.bd

INVITATION FOR TENDER

Sealed Tender is hereby invited from the manufacturer/wholesaler/supplier for supply of furniture & others for emergency duty doctor's room of Upazila Health Complexes (UHC). As per PPR-2008, terms and conditions are as follows:

KEY INFORMATION				
1 Ministry/Division	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW), Health Services Division.			
2 Agency	Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), MOHFW.			
3 Procuring Entity	Line Director, Upazila Health Care (UHC), DGHS.			
4 Procuring Entity Code	224330400			
5 Procuring Entity District	Dhaka			
6 Invitation for	Supply of Furniture & others for emergency duty doctor's room of Upazila Health Complexes.			
7 Invitation for offer Ref. No	UHC/Proc./GOB/Furniture (Emer. duty doctor's room)-89/2021-22/910			
8 Date	14.02.2022			
KEY INFORMATION				
9 Procurement Method	Open Tender Method (OTM)			
FUNDING INFORMATION				
10 Budget and Source of Funds	GOB (Dev.)			
11 Developments Partners	None			
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
12 Project/Program Code	224330400			
13 Project/Program Name	UHC			
14 Tender Package No	UHC/G-GD-4/2021-22			
15 Offer Package Name	Furniture & others for emergency duty doctor's room of UHC.			
16 Tender Publication Date	15.02.2022			
17 Tender Last Selling Date	27.02.2022 at 5.00 pm			
18 Tender Closing Date and Time	28.02.2022 at 12 pm			
19 Tender Opening Date and Time	28.02.2022 at 2 pm			
20 Name and address of the Office	a) Office of the Line Director, UHC, DGHS, BMRC Bhaban (1 st floor), Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212. b) Office of the Commissioner, Dhaka Division, Segun Bagicha, Dhaka. c) Central Medical Store Depot (CMSD), Tejgaon, Dhaka.			
a) Selling of Tender Documents	a) Office of the Line Director, UHC, DGHS, BMRC Bhaban (1 st floor), Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212. b) Office of the Commissioner, Dhaka Division, Segun Bagicha, Dhaka. c) Central Medical Store Depot (CMSD), Tejgaon, Dhaka.			
b) Receiving of Tender Documents	a) Office of the Line Director, UHC, DGHS, BMRC Bhaban (1 st floor), Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212. b) Office of the Commissioner, Dhaka Division, Segun Bagicha, Dhaka. c) Central Medical Store Depot (CMSD), Tejgaon, Dhaka.			
c) Opening of Tender Documents	Office of the Line Director, UHC, DGHS, BMRC Bhaban, (1 st floor), Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.			
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
21 Eligibility of Tenderer	As stated in TDS			
22 Brief Description of Goods	Supply of Furniture & others (09 items) for emergency duty doctor's room of 100 UHCs			
23 Price of Tender Documents Taka	TK. 5,000 (Five Thousand) only by Treasury Challan (with CTR) Code No. 1-2711-0000-2368 to be deposited Sonali Bank Ltd. or Bangladesh Bank. (Non-refundable).			
24 No	Identification & Name	Location	Tender Security Amounts in BDT	Completion time (in weeks)
Lot-1 & Lot-2	UHC office, BMRC Bhaban, Mohakhali, Dhaka.	Tk. 3,00,000 (Three Lacs) for Lot-1 & Tk. 2,00,000 (Two Lacs) for Lot-2 only by Pay Order/Bank Draft or Bank Guarantee in Prescribed format in favour of Line Director, UHC, DGHS.	12 (Twelve) weeks from date of signing the contract.	
PROCURING ENTITY DETAIL				
25 Name of Official Inviting Offer	Dr. Md. Rizwanur Rahman			
26 Designation of Official Inviting Offer	Line Director, UHC, DGHS.			
27 Address of Official Inviting Offer	BMRC Bhaban (1 st floor), Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.			
28 Contact details of Official Inviting Offer	Phone: 02-222280785, Fax: 02-222282900			

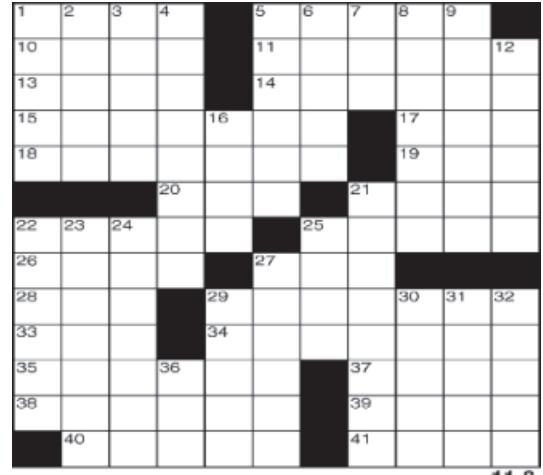
The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all offers.


Dr. Md. Rizwanur Rahman
Line Director
Upazila Health Care (UHC), DGHS
BMRC Bhaban (1st floor), Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS	28 Road sealer	7 Bol. neighbor
1 Scissors	29 Umbrella	8 Contradictory
sound	look-alike	33 Stretch of idea
5 Trades	33 Stretch of years	9 Like surgical tools
10 Volcano flow	34 Radius or ulna	12 Hardens
11 "Phooey!"	35 Money-back offer	16 Le Pew of cartoons
13 Smell	37 Norse god	21 Trajectory shape
14 Feel bad about	38 Second place medal	22 Fall flowers
15 Castle defense	39 Places	23 Get a cut of a
17 "Roses – red"	40 Comes close	24 Tale with a moral
18 Guile	41 Church reply	25 Balmy
19 Game cube		27 Kitchen knives
20 Make a choice	1 Feeds the pigs	29 – Noster Rafael
21 Trend determiner	2 Tennis star	30 City of sin
22 Easy –	3 Tusk material	31 Chilled
25 Grows, as the moon	4 Unduly suspicious	32 Red Square name
26 Herring's cousin	5 Most tender	36 Gardner of film
27 Golf goal	6 Sharpens	

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



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