

The CEC is gone, long live the CEC!



OF MAGIC
& MADNESS

BADIUZZAMAN BAY

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:
BIPOLO
CHAKROBORTY

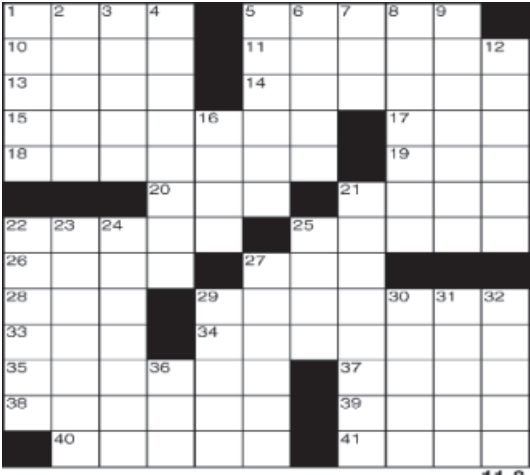
According to retired Justice Abdul Matin of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, who served in several such search committees, the chairman or members of the committee tasked with finding eligible candidates can do very little. Despite their efforts, what happens in the end is that "the Cabinet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

CORRIGENDUM

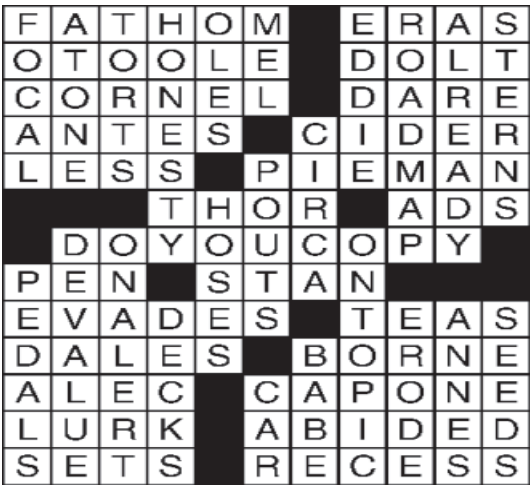
The headline of an interview of Mahbub Talukdar published by *The Daily Star* on February 14, 2022 had a typographical error. The correct headline is, "My agenda has been to upload democracy." We sincerely apologise for this mistake.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



BETTER BANNER



BARRETT'S & SCOTT



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.
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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) 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. 1-2711-0000-2366 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/G-GD-4/2021-22	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			BMRC Bhaban, Mohakhali, Dhaka. 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.