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Why should young people be politically aware?

HARISUR ROHOMAN

It is expected that a talented young person will play an integral role in the country's policy-making in the future and serve the country with their wit and knowledge. But in the social system of Bangladesh, the youth are becoming politically unaware and distancing themselves from political discourse due to the general perception that the political landscape is corrupt.

What is political awareness? Political awareness means having the basic knowledge of politics, studying the important issues of history and having the ability to analyse current events through an informed lens. However, many people now understand political awareness as the implementation of the ideology, spirit and purpose of a particular political party through active participation.

But this is an inaccurate assumption. We must remember that direct participation in politics and political awareness are entirely different things. It is important for a person, who directly participates in politics to be politically aware, but it is not necessary for a politically aware person to directly participate in politics. A politically aware person can help change the quality of politics from their position. For this, it is vital that the medium through which the youth attain political knowledge is improved.

The youth are constantly exposed to political activities. In addition, the negative perception of politics has instilled in them as the idea that politics is an inherently bad thing. But does the brunt of the youth's reluctance, or rather, aversion from politics, fall only on the youth? Of course not.

The state itself can never escape responsibility. Disruption of democratic practices in the educational institution by stopping student parliament elections, partisanship in the name of student politics, the exercise of brute display of power, tendering, handing over leadership of student politics to non-students, increase in unemployment and lack of employment opportunities amidst other things have forced them to divert their attention away from politics. The state must do its due diligence to ensure such undesirable practices do not seep into our system.

Nonetheless, why should the youth even be politically aware? The problem of political unawareness has to be borne equally by the individual, the society, as well as the state. The biggest downside of political ignorance is that it gives rise to ignorant leadership. Underqualified policymakers naturally implement policies that don't bode well for the system. It is because of such policies that qualified personnel are frustrated, and compelled to leave the country. As a result, society and the state have to face the consequences of brain-drain.

If any new policy or law is passed in the country, the youth should be able to analyse it and voice their opinions about it in an informed manner. The younger subset should be aware of what is happening around them. It is important to be politically aware to understand your rights. While, it is not essential to be directly involved in politics and political parties, it is vital to be politically aware.

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How to offer support to survivors of sexual assault

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Sexual abuse is a disturbing part of reality. Although it is crucial to empower the survivors of sexual assault by extending our support to them in every way possible, it is a very sensitive situation to deal with. Thus, I am writing this article to share the wisdom I have been imparted with, through experiences as an advocate for mental health, hoping it helps you provide mental health support to a survivor when needed.

Firstly, you must understand that it is not fair to take a decisive stance and state your opinions matter-of-factly if you aren't aware of the details from an objective point of view. It is pertinent that we do not feed into sensationalised narratives by impulsively sharing inflammatory pieces of information that isn't verifiable. People's lives are at stake, and spreading a narrative devoid of objectivity could jeopardise the investigation.

If a survivor confides in you, you should make an effort to empathise with them and offer help in every way possible for you. You could offer them emotional support and help them reach out to the relevant authorities to seek justice for themselves. Do not take it upon yourself to deliver



ILLUSTRATION: **FATIMA JAHAN ENA**

justice to someone. You aren't expected to do so.

Many people conflate supporting the survivor with waging a war against the accused. They start bullying the accused and go to extreme lengths to make their life miserable. Not only is it insensible to do so, it might have an adverse impact on the situation.

Moreover, it takes away much of the attention from the actual issue at hand, turning into a he-said-she-said limbo. In case the accused offender happens to be a friend or an acquaintance, you might want to limit your interactions with them until the truth comes out, as the victim might feel betrayed and develop trust issues if they see you being friendly with their abuser after confiding in you about the traumatic experience.

It is pertinent to be tactful while conversing with the survivor. Please ensure that it does not come across as an interrogation or round of intense questioning. Try to refrain from asking for details unless they willingly share them. Please remember that it is not for you to investigate the authenticity of the accusation. Even if you have to verify a piece of information for any reason which entails requesting information from the survivor, you should politely explain to them why the information is crucial for you before proceeding.

For instance, if you are a part of the disciplinary committee of an organisation the accused individual is affiliated with, you will need to meticulously assess the situation and take necessary actions. If they consent to participate, please ask your questions while keeping the topic's sensitivity in mind without pressuring them if they seem to be uncomfortable.

Understand the person has been through major trauma, so it is crucial to be patient with them. Survivors might block out specific details of the incident from their conscious minds. Hence, don't make them feel invalidated if they fail to recollect any information, and let a mental health professional deal with it instead.

To conclude, treat the survivor like you would treat someone you deeply care about. Try to practice active empathy in every possible situation in your personal life, and it will guide you through such situations without every step becoming a moral dilemma.

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