

Barriers to youth participation in politics and ways to overcome them

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suffocating political situation. However, the lackluster performance of the interim government, despite the overwhelming support at its inception, the actions of a few other political parties are once again pushing many of these youths towards 'hating' politics," said Shamrir.

Corruption and the pervasive influence of money in politics further complicate the picture. The escalating costs associated with running for office or even participating in party activities often deter young individuals, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In these cases, politics becomes an exclusive domain for those with access to wealth and resources, leaving the majority of honest youth on the periphery.

"As a matter of fact, sadly, the saying 'leaving Bangladesh is the biggest dream' has become popular among the disillusioned youth, highlighting the vast gap between their aspirations and the interest of the political parties and the reality of our socio-economic state," said Shamrir.

The education system also does little to prepare young people for active citizenship. Despite progress in expanding access to education, the curriculum often lacks emphasis on civic education, critical thinking, and leadership skills. This absence deprives young people of the knowledge and confidence needed to navigate the political landscape.

THE CORRECT WAY FORWARD IN POLITICS: INCLUSION

Politics is inherently related with every aspect of life. As the youths are the torchbearers of the future generation, their voice and concerns need to be addressed politically to make proper policies and ensure that those policies have a realistic feasibility. In order to make conscious political arguments and practice, the youth need to develop historical and political knowledge to navigate themselves in this path. Current affairs, their implications and analysis are also a must.

Regarding this matter, the 30-year-old activist Tousif added, "Deshi youths are inherently apolitical and they want to know only through reading social media



news. Only way to overcome this is please stop scrolling for news and read legit newspapers, make it your lifestyle."

The youth's skepticism towards political parties stems from broken promises and systemic issues. Nepotism, corruption, and abuse of power have eroded trust. To regain the trust of young people, political parties must prioritise accountability and transparency.

Emphasising the importance of political parties reforming their approach, Shamrir said, "Overcoming these barriers will be a laborious endeavor. Ensuring transparency and accountability in the operations and decision-making processes of major political parties should be the first step. Parties should welcome the voices of the youth. Platforms for dialogue, where youth can express their concerns and see their input reflected in

PHOTO: ZARIF FAIAZ

policy, are vital. Parties must also focus on youth-centric policies directly tackling issues like education, job creation, and digital rights to demonstrate their commitment to the youth's future."

Comprehensive political education is essential for empowering young people. Civic education should be integrated into school curriculum, with workshops, debates, and mentorship programs that teach democratic principles. Political parties and activists can use social media to foster dialogue, disseminate credible information, and mobilise support.

Economic stability is a prerequisite for political engagement. The government must prioritise job creation, particularly in emerging sectors, and invest in upskilling programs to equip young people for the modern workforce. Addressing unemployment will reduce

emigration and inspire more civic participation.

The role of youth in the July revolution and its aftermath demonstrates their eagerness and capability to shape the country's political future. However, this potential can only become a reality if political parties and institutions actively engage with and respond to the aspirations of the younger generation.

By addressing systemic challenges and creating avenues for meaningful participation, Bangladesh can harness the energy and vision of its younger generation. The stakes are high, but the potential is unparalleled—like the Cuban phrase "Patria o Muerte". "Homeland or Death".

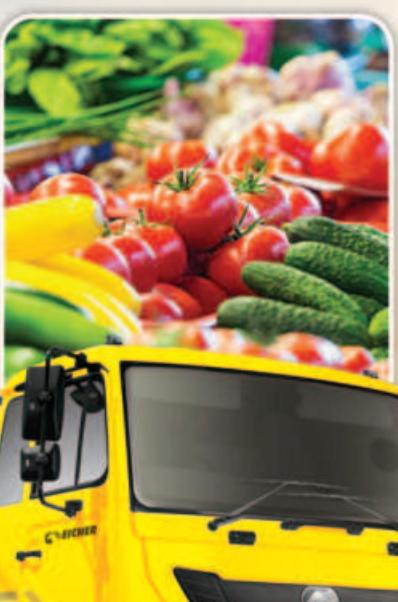
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