

Will youth political engagement ever go beyond protesting?



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Lately, Dhaka has increasingly become a city of protests, with people taking to the streets almost every other day to demand some kind of reform or change. Hardly a week passes without a group of protesters blocking a major intersection in the city, voicing grievances that range from governance failures to economic concerns. A few weeks ago, students of Government Titumir College, for instance, blocked roads and railways demanding that their college be upgraded to university status. Then we saw students from the Medical Assistant Training School staging a demonstration demanding better employment opportunities. The damage to our already struggling economy due to all these disruptions, particularly the traffic congestion they cause in the capital, is already proving far too heavy to bear. However, while social media is awash with conspiracy theories regarding who or what is instigating these movements, there is little meaningful discourse on why people, especially young people, feel compelled to resort to such measures.

Regardless of who is instigating what, these protests have proven time and time again that the only way to get a voice heard in Bangladesh is to shout as loudly as possible while also disrupting the lives of the common citizenry. But is this really the kind of political discourse that we want in the country?

Before the July uprising, several research and opinion pieces indicated that young people

in Bangladesh were increasingly disengaging from formal political participation. Analysts highlighted that most young people not only lack the knowledge of key political processes, but also feel their voices will disappear into a bureaucratic void. While there was a glimmer of hope that things might change after the fall of an authoritarian regime, many people are now frustrated with corruption, economic hardship, and the perception that their concerns may ultimately not be addressed, especially when government feedback mechanisms appear superficial rather than effective channels for real change.

Similarly, a pre-uprising study on the political perception of youth in Bangladesh found that, despite high levels of patriotism, nearly 95 percent of respondents believed that politics was risky and unrewarding. A key reason cited was the absence of an accessible, unified system for engagement—one where feedback could effectively reach decision-makers and lead to tangible outcomes.

Considering the perception of politics held by the general youth in the country, the recent youth-led protests can be put into perspective. Creation of structured and effective platforms for engagement between the government and the people, particularly non-politically affiliated youth, has been long overdue in Bangladesh. As a result, instead of being actively involved in shaping policies and governance, young people often find

themselves resorting to protests—and in many cases, violence—to express their concerns. Of course, having an activist mentality among the young of a nation is never bad. However, when activism and protests become the only language of youth politics, and when protests so regularly turn violent, they deter the majority of the youth from mainstream politics and exacerbates political instability in the country by driving people to be more

cycle of protests and violence. Universities, community centres, and digital forums could all serve as mediums for open discussion, allowing young people to engage directly with policymakers. Civil society has to play a crucial role in this regard by routinely offering opportunities for open dialogue between young citizens and policymakers. One important initiative that the civil society can undertake is hosting regular youth-focused

that young voices participate meaningfully in the national decision-making process. Furthermore, incorporating civic education into school curricula will foster a sense of duty and awareness in people from an early age. By teaching them about governance, political rights, and how to engage peacefully in the public sphere, the government could empower young people to engage constructively before resorting to protests and violence.

Ultimately, it is the public sphere of Bangladeshi politics that is the issue here. German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, known for his work on communicative action and democracy, coined the concept of "public sphere." According to Habermas, the public sphere is "made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state." This idea of an inclusive public sphere, reimagined in Bangladesh's context, can offer a critical lens through which to understand this dilemma. A functional public sphere, untainted from partisan showmanship and undue vested interest, where young people can engage in open and meaningful discourse with policymakers, is essential for fostering democratic participation and reducing the need for disruptive protests. Political dialogue in Bangladesh needs to be taken off the streets and into proper public spheres, which can incorporate modern elements and technology such as online social networks and new media.

After a brutal uprising, it is the collective responsibility of all of us to come together and cultivate a politically engaged and peaceful generation. To that end, the government, civil society, and all political parties in the country must contribute to creating inclusive platforms and a public sphere that empowers young voices and creates structured spaces for political dialogues. By doing so, it can be ensured that the nation's unheard voices find space, and the next generation can contribute positively to the political landscape.



Students of Government Titumir College signal a train to stop during a demonstration at the capital's Mohakhali level crossing during their protest on November 18, 2024. The protest cut off Kamalapur Railway Station from the rest of the country for about four hours.

FILE PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

reactive than proactive.

It is high time we started to create and support new forums that enable discourse between the youth and the government. That is the only way to break out of the

colloquiums in all regions of Bangladesh to highlight the youth's voice and their policy demands. In the same vein, political parties must build youth wings that prioritise policy formulation over partisan agitation, ensuring

The untapped legacy of Prof Jamal Nazrul Islam



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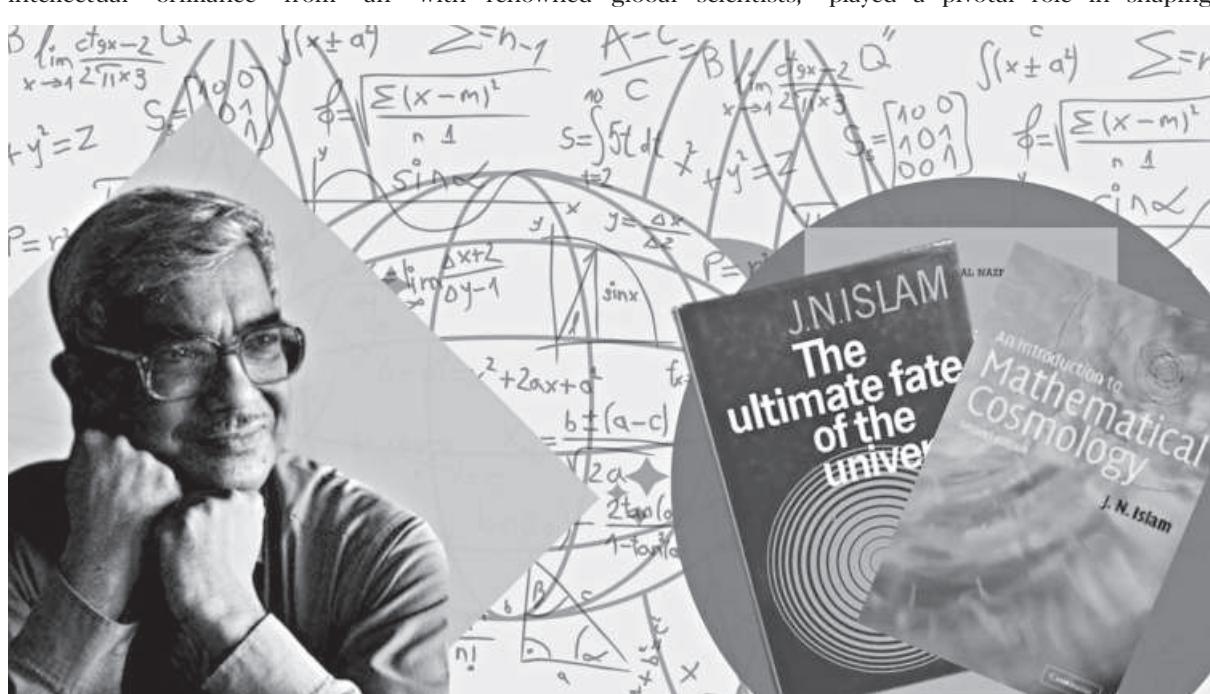
Prof Jamal Nazrul Islam (1939-2013) was not just a mathematician or physicist—he was a visionary who sought to bridge the infinite wonders of the cosmos with the intellectual ambitions of Bangladesh. Recognised as one of South Asia's most brilliant scientific minds, his contributions to mathematics, cosmology, and theoretical physics left an indelible mark on global scientific thought. His three seminal books—*The Ultimate Fate of the Universe*, *Rotating Fields in General Relativity*, and *An Introduction to Mathematical Cosmology* (all published by Cambridge University Press)—continue to inspire young minds and remain foundational texts in the field.

Born on February 24, 1939, in Jhenaidah, Bengal Presidency (the then British India), Jamal Nazrul Islam displayed an innate intellectual brilliance from an

legendary astrophysicist Fred Hoyle, a pioneer in modern cosmology. He later earned his PhD from the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), cementing his place among the global elite of scientific thinkers.

Prof Islam's groundbreaking work explored some of the most profound mysteries of the universe, focusing on cosmic singularities, black holes, and the ultimate fate of the cosmos. His insights into singularity theory—where gravitational forces cause matter to become infinitely dense—contributed significantly to our understanding of black holes and cosmic evolution.

His book *The Ultimate Fate of the Universe* became a seminal text, offering groundbreaking theories on the long-term evolution of celestial bodies and the eventual destiny of the universe. His collaborations with renowned global scientists,



VISUAL: MONOROM POLOK

early age, nurtured by an academic household led by his father, Khan Bahadur Sirajul Islam, a senior government official. His early academic achievements paved his way to the prestigious University of Cambridge in the UK, where he pursued mathematics with exceptional promise.

At Trinity College in Cambridge, Islam completed his doctoral research under the mentorship of

along with his contributions to gravitational collapse and general relativity, placed him among the most influential cosmologists of his time.

Despite his international stature, Prof Islam made a conscious choice to return to Bangladesh in the 1980s. He joined the University of Chittagong (CU) and later founded the Research Centre for Mathematical and Physical Sciences.

China's scientific landscape. After achieving global recognition, Yang returned to China and helped rebuild the country's scientific foundations. As a mentor and adviser, he was instrumental in fostering advanced research and encouraging international collaboration. His leadership at Tsinghua University and efforts to modernise scientific education elevated China's global academic

standing.

Yang's legacy is not just in his discoveries but in inspiring generations of Chinese scientists, bridging East and West, and helping position China as a global leader in scientific research and innovation. Yang was instrumental in fostering advanced research and international collaboration, helping position China as a global leader in scientific innovation.

Had Bangladesh embraced Jamal Nazrul Islam with the same institutional support that China provided Chen-Ning Yang, the nation could have built a premier research centre attracting top minds from around the world. The lost opportunity serves as a cautionary

tale of how nations rise or falter based on their ability to nurture intellectual brilliance.

Despite the lack of government support, Prof Islam remained dedicated to fostering scientific curiosity. Through his teaching, mentorship, and the establishment of the Research Centre for Mathematical and Physical Sciences, he continued to inspire countless students. His contributions earned him Ekushey Padak in 2000, one of Bangladesh's highest civilian honours.

It is not too late to honour the legacy of Prof Jamal Nazrul Islam. The government and academic institutions could still establish a research institute in his name, fostering international collaborations in theoretical physics

and mathematics. Scholarships, fellowships, and research grants dedicated to his memory could ensure that future generations receive the recognition and support that Prof Islam was denied.

Prof Islam's life is a poignant reminder that true national progress lies not just in economic achievements but in the recognition, nurturing, and empowerment of intellectual visionaries. By honouring his legacy, Bangladesh can signal a renewed commitment to scientific excellence, ensuring that no such brilliance ever goes unnoticed again. In the end, the greatest measure of a nation's success is its ability to recognise its brightest minds and provide them with the platform to transform the future.

BANGLADESH RURAL ELECTRIFICATION BOARD
POWER DIVISION, MINISTRY OF POWER, ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Memo No: 27.12.0651.032.07.08.001.25-74 Date: 17-02-2025

Tender Notice e-GP (LTM)

e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for construction/Up-gradation/Coverage of overhead electrical distribution line under the geographical area of Barisal-1/2, Pirojpur & Patuakhali PBS of Modernization & Capacity Enhancement of BREB Network (Barisal Division) Project. Tender submission deadlines are mentioned below:

SL No.	Tender Sub- package No.	Description of Works	Tender ID No.	Closing & Opening Date	Closing & Opening Time
1	MCEP/BREB/ BD-L-10-2	Construction of 15.267 Km 33 KV Electric Distribution Line (New/Up- Gradiation/Underground) under the geographical area of Barisal PBS-1.	1073751		10:00
2	MCEP/BREB/ BD-L-31-1	Testing, Commissioning & Coverage of 26.469 KM Electric Line (LT to HT/HT Single Phase to Three Phase/Installation of Insulated Conductor) under the geographical area of Barisal PBS-1.	1073752		10:15
3	MCEP/BREB/ BD-L-38-5	Testing, Commissioning & Coverage of 27.015 KM Electric Line (LT to HT/HT Single Phase to Three Phase/Installation of Insulated Conductor) under the geographical area of Barisal PBS-2.	1073753		10:30
4	MCEP/BREB/ BD-L-39-1	Testing, Commissioning & Coverage of 13.096 KM Electric Line (LT to HT/HT Single Phase to Three Phase/Installation of Insulated Conductor) under the geographical area of Barisal PBS-2.	1073754		10:45
5	MCEP/BREB/ BD-L-44-1	Testing, Commissioning & Coverage of 16.881 KM Electric Line (LT to HT/HT Single Phase to Three Phase/Installation of Insulated Conductor) under the geographical area of Pirojpur PBS.	1073755		11:00
6	MCEP/BREB/ BD-L-42-5	Testing, Commissioning & Coverage of 14.832 KM Electric Line (LT to HT/HT Single Phase to Three Phase/Installation of Insulated Conductor) under the geographical area of Pirojpur PBS.	1073756		11:15
7	MCEP/BREB/ BD-L-14-3	Construction of 16.007 KM 33 KV Electric Distribution Line (New/Up- Gradiation/Underground) under the geographical area of Patuakhali PBS.	1073757		11:30
8	MCEP/BREB/ BD-L-47-1	Testing, Commissioning & Coverage of 24.072 KM Electric Line (LT to HT/HT Single Phase to Three Phase/Installation of Insulated Conductor) under the geographical area of Patuakhali PBS.	1073758		11:45
9	MCEP/BREB/ BD-L-48-1	Testing, Commissioning & Coverage of 13.806 KM Electric Line (LT to HT/HT Single Phase to Three Phase/Installation of Insulated Conductor) under the geographical area of Patuakhali PBS.	1073759		12:00
10	MCEP/BREB/ BD-L-49-1	Testing, Commissioning & Coverage of 12.759 KM Electric Line (LT to HT/HT Single Phase to Three Phase/Installation of Insulated Conductor) under the geographical area of Patuakhali PBS.	1073760		12:15

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no off line/hard copies will be accepted. Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any e-GP registered bank's branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject all the Tenders Proceedings without any Reason.

বাংলাদেশ পর্যায় বিদ্যুতায়ন বোর্ড

BANGLADESH RURAL ELECTRIFICATION BOARD

বাগবিলো/জন (২৫০২-১৪৬) ২০২৩-২০২৪

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