

Can Mamdani deliver on the issues that secured his win?



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

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ABDULLAH SHIBLI

The mayoral election in New York City (NYC) generated global interest because the frontrunner was Zohran Mamdani, a relatively unknown politician who campaigned on a socialist platform, focused on “bread-and-butter issues” and promised many economic benefits to improve the lives of the city’s average denizens. On the election day, November 4, Mamdani beat a well-known politician, Andrew Cuomo, who had the backing of President Trump and Republicans, to become the first Asian-American mayor of NYC.

What is the significance of Mamdani’s victory? First and foremost, the lesson I take is that democracy is a powerful force and, once in a while, needs to be tested. Mamdani’s ability to claim the mayoralty is evidence that, regardless of what we hear otherwise, the popular vote counts.

Secondly, a grassroots campaign for an electoral office by a group of energetic and dedicated supporters can beat the odds and overpower any vested interest. Mamdani was characterised by some quarters as a communist, antisemitic, unqualified, and a liar. But the voters of New York knew better. Cuomo, who was the Governor of New York State, expressed scepticism that Mamdani would not be able to execute his ideas. “You know, the pattern is politicians talk a lot, promise a lot, get into office, nothing happens, right?” Cuomo said.

Thirdly, *The Economist* rightly identifies New York as “the country’s most enduring symbol of two American ideals, pluralism and opportunity.” The election of a young mayor with little administrative experience reaffirms the country’s enduring faith in innovative ideas and its nurturing environment for talented individuals.

Fourthly, this was the first election since Trump took office in January that provided an opportunity to gauge voters’ current

political mood. It would be premature to say that the election results confirm that Trump’s extreme policies are unpopular. However, NYC has often set the political, cultural, and financial course of the country. Both Republicans and Democrats, the two dominant parties, had their eyes on NYC to provide clues before preparing for the mid-term elections next year.

Overall, Mamdani’s victory can be attributed to a combination of strategic campaigning, effective communication, and the political landscape that favoured a change from traditional candidates. Zohran Kwame Mamdani, born in Kampala, Uganda, to Indian American filmmaker Mira Nair and Ugandan scholar Mahmood Mamdani of Gujarati descent, managed to marshal grassroots support from a multicultural, diverse community, including Black and Hispanic minorities and immigrants from South Asia.

Before his mayoral candidacy, he was a social activist. He served for four years as a member of the New York state legislature from the 36th district, representing the Queens neighbourhood of Astoria. As a

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socialist, he gained the support of a left-leaning organisation named “Desis Rising Up & Moving (DRUM),” a multi-generational organisation of South Asian immigrants in NYC espousing social and economic justice. He promised higher minimum wages, free childcare, rent control, and free bus service.

The rise of Mamdani electrified the large immigrant communities living in and around NYC. For many struggling with the high

time for the underclass in the US. The federal government crisis is in its sixth week, and the Trump administration is carrying on with its cuts in various sectors and rounding up of undocumented immigrants. The country is reeling from the longest government shutdown in history. Mamdani’s election reignited the dormant Democrats and offered the majority a chance to claim political power. The results of the NYC and gubernatorial elections in New

resources for the free bus, free day care, and free food programmes promised by Mamdani. “Implementing his vision will demand far more than pious intentions; it will require sustained support and cooperation from diverse political stakeholders, including those in Albany,” veteran journalist Hasan Ferdous, who now lives in New York wrote to me in a private communication.

The newly elected mayor will also face



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FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

cost of living in the New York metropolitan area, the “Rags to Riches” story of Mamdani has offered a renewed sense of hope and a glimmer of a future that will bring them closer to the American dream. Polls largely underestimated Zohran Mamdani’s support in the Democratic primary for the New York City mayor, but he emerged as the party’s candidate after winning 56 percent of the vote. His overwhelming victory on November 4 capped the year-long effort to mobilise the South Asian community and the underprivileged segments of the megacity.

Mamdani’s election came at a critical

Jersey and Virginia should give Republicans a nudge to reconsider the tactics they have been following over the last year.

As the new mayor takes office in January, he will have a tough uphill battle in order to deliver on his promises and to stay clear of the federal government’s wrath. President Trump had previously warned that if Zohran Mamdani were to win, it would be “highly unlikely” that the city would receive federal funding beyond a bare minimum.

The new administration will need the commitment of both the New York Governor and the assembly to get the funding and

some tough opposition from the business community. To quote Sudesh Chohan, a small business owner from Flushing, Queens, from an article in *The New York Times*, “I’ve been working hard for 45 years. I don’t want my tax dollars going to someone who can work but chooses not to.”

Therefore, Mamdani’s victory, while a reaffirmation of faith in participatory democracy and the power of collective action, is not the ultimate test for progressive ideals. Rather, as he takes office, his ability to deliver on his promises will be closely watched—not just in New York, but around the world.

Remembering Roushan Jahan: My sister, teacher, comrade



Rounaq Jahan is a political scientist, feminist author and distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

ROUNAQ JAHAN

Roushan Jahan, one of the pioneer researchers on women’s empowerment, passed away on Tuesday, November 4, 2025. She was my sister, four years older than me, and the firstborn amongst six siblings. She was a born teacher, and when I was growing up, I completely relied on her to give answers to all my questions on any subject! My younger brother Kabir and I had problems pronouncing some Bangla syllables when we were children. Though she was barely eight or nine herself, Roushan managed to teach us how to move our tongue to pronounce correctly. Later in life, Roushan and I shared a common passion for doing research and writing on women’s empowerment.

She was an exceptionally bright student, curious to read everything from the age of four. Roushan was especially fond of literature. She was articulate, made friends easily, and her teachers in school, college and university recognised and appreciated her many talents. Though I was four years younger, and she could have easily chosen to spend time with friends of her own age group, she devoted an enormous amount of time to me, telling me stories, playing with me, and teaching me Bangla and English grammar and literature. We were inseparable as children and all through our school and college years till she left for her higher studies in English literature at the University of Chicago on a Fulbright scholarship in 1961.

Roushan not only excelled in her studies. She participated in school theatres and learnt music from Ustad Ayet Ali Khan in Cumilla. She was interested in films and sports. I remember, when Calcutta Mohammedan Sporting Club came to Dhaka to play football, Roushan

and I went to the stadium to watch the game, only two girls in a sea of men! She was quite fearless in taking these bold decisions.

Roushan was a favourite student of both Dr Syed Sajjad Hussain and Dr Khan Sarwar Murshid in the English Department at Dhaka University (DU), which was quite an achievement! After passing her MA in English literature, she taught briefly at Eden College and then joined the teaching faculty of the English Department at DU.



Roushan Jahan (1940-2025)

At the University of Chicago, again, she was a favourite student of Professor Edward C. Dimock. She helped him in his translation work and taught Bangla to US students, many of whom still remember her fondly. At age 92, Professor Ralph Nicholas, also from the University of Chicago, remains grateful to Roushan for teaching him Bangla. The recordings of her teaching were used for years at the university. At Chicago, she also met Muzaffar Ahmed, who was then a PhD student in the economics department. They later got married when Roushan returned to Dhaka in 1966. I missed her wedding because

I was doing my PhD at Harvard University during that time.

Roushan never got back to her teaching career at DU after marriage. The book is still much in demand. She translated into English parts of Rokeya’s *Oborodh Bashini* and also Ahmed Sofa’s *Onkar*.

In addition to research and writing, Roushan was actively involved with other women’s and civil society organisations such as Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Ain o Salish Kendra, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), Education Watch and Bangla-German Shampriti (BGS). She worked on a voluntary basis in all these organisations for decades with commitment and dedication. She was always a behind-the-scenes worker, never trying to promote herself as a leader. She wrote or edited the reports

of many of these organisations.

Roushan also actively participated in many regional and international conferences. We both attended the UN Women’s Conference in Nairobi in 1985, and we three sisters Roushan, Nilufar and I attended the fourth UN Women’s Conference in Beijing in 1995. Roushan and Nilufar were not only my sisters, but we all became comrades fighting a common cause. Now, Roushan’s daughter Sohela Nazneen has joined the same good fight.

Roushan and my close bonding might have come as a surprise to many, as we had very different personalities. Roushan was a truly kind and humble person, never hurting anybody, never pushing herself forward, almost a saint-like

figure. I was the total opposite! But we never quarrelled, largely because Roushan was always so very loving and forgiving. She has left a void in my life that will never be filled. I will miss her every day of my remaining days, but will always rejoice remembering our happy memories together, walking in the garden where Roushan could identify every tree and flower, looking at the stars as she named them all, reading a book or a poem where she could recite every line, or listening to a song where she could sing along. She enjoyed the simple things of life. She was my first teacher, who opened my eyes to the wide vista of a world beyond me. I thank my lucky stars that such an exceptional human being appeared in my life and kept me company for so many years.

in New York and was widely used as a textbook in women and gender studies courses in US universities. The book is still much in demand. She translated into English parts of Rokeya’s *Oborodh Bashini* and also Ahmed Sofa’s *Onkar*.

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e-Tender Notice
Tender Notice no.4/2025-26

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Identification of Lot	Tender Publishing date & time	Last selling Date & time	Tender closing date & time
1.	1157037	Procurement of Electric Equipment	10 November 2025 9:00	20 November 2025 12:00	20 November 2025 14:00

This is the online Tender and method of tender is OTM. Only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no off-line/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration is required in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd). The fee for downloading the e-Tender document from the National e-GP System Portal has to be deposited online through any registered bank.

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