

#PERSPECTIVE



# As elections near, CITIZENS SHARE HOPES for Bangladesh



The mood across Bangladesh is shifting ahead of the election. You can feel it! For the first time in over a decade, people are experiencing something they have long forgotten: candidates appealing to the people, hoping that they will choose them as their new representatives. And, with all this, come expectations people have from their new government. As we speak, voters are drawing up their own lists of what they want.

Star **LIFE** Style

The mood across Bangladesh is shifting ahead of the election. You can feel it! For the first time in over a decade, people are experiencing something they have long forgotten: candidates appealing to the people, hoping that they will choose them as their new representatives. And, with all this, come expectations people have from their new government. As we speak, voters are drawing up their own lists of what they want.

Monir Hossain, a street musician who earns a living by playing the traditional flute on the streets of Dhaka, appealed, "I just want to live in a country where artists and creative workers can freely practice their art and make a living with the same respect as anyone else."

It can be said that safeguarding our cultural art, heritage and tourism is ultimately in everyone's interest.

Mahbub Hasan, a travel enthusiast, called on the new government to take urgent action to preserve our heritage sites and protect the tourism sector, noting that these two shape how Bangladesh is branded on the global stage. It can also attract more foreign visitors, increase foreign currency inflows, ease balance-of-payments pressures, and, in the long run, help reduce the cost of living.

The government's decision to feature Bangladesh's cultural heritage and artwork, including but not limited to the Shaat Gombuj Mosque in Bagerhat and Struggle by Zainul Abedin, on currency notes is one step in the right direction, many believe.

Janifar Kamal, a development professional who has formerly worked at leading non-government organisations such as BRAC and Save the Children Bangladesh, expressed, "I would like to see concrete numbers and percentages that demonstrate sustained progress in women's empowerment. Additionally, funding for young entrepreneurs, as well as loans and



training, should be adequate."

In the book, Why Nations Fail, Nobel Prize-winning authors pointed out how a country's governance determines whether it will succeed or fail in the long run. They highlight several case studies of nations that collapsed due to poor and unjust governance that favoured only a privileged few at the top. As citizens and well-wishers of this country, we simply do not wish to see our nation become an example or case study for scholars who study failed nations.

Referring to recruitment practices often influenced by favouritism, Dr Mohammad Shahidul Islam, an associate professor of a renowned private university, remarked, "The right people should be in the right positions. The state should identify those who can contribute effectively. Everyone should be allowed to participate, and for that, we need a spontaneous environment where people get rewarded for thriving and getting actual results."

Whereas others argue that the solution lies in less government intervention

rather than more. Dr Ekramul Islam, an assistant professor at BRAC University with a PhD in Urban and Public Affairs, shared in this regard, "We need a smaller government, less complex bureaucracy, and economic liberalism, where market forces operate freely with minimal government intervention."

We expect improved ease of doing business in this country; only then can we create more job opportunities.

Rezoyan Ahmed, a university student set to graduate this year, addressed this issue, saying, "I want a government that focuses on creating jobs for us as we enter the workforce. I also hope for a stable or lower cost of living so we can do more than just get by."

At the same time, many believe that preserving the fundamental values of the July Anti-quota Movement should be a priority.

Ananya Afrin, a final year university student who aspires to serve the country by joining the government's civil services,

asserted, "We want a government that is aware of the daily struggles of its people. Traffic jam, inflation, pollution, corruption and safety of citizens should be at the top priority."

"Freedom of speech should be a non-negotiable term, as the history of Bangladesh in 1952, 1971, and 2024 has shown us time and again that it is something people have sacrificed their lives for," Afrin added.

It means not having to hold back from expressing their opinions on social media for fear of consequences from offending or criticising a political party.

Munshi Jamshed Aziz, a law graduate currently pursuing a Master of Laws (LLM) at Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), advocated for speedy and equal justice for all, saying, "No matter who the person is, everyone must be granted equal access to justice in our country."

As for me, for once, I would simply like to see a deviation from the Orwellian pattern we often see in the dynamic of governance. Instances where leaders become controlling and corrupt, like Napoleon in Animal Farm, a book that explores power and its abuse. I hope the party that gets chosen remembers the promises and agenda it advocated before being elected.

This time around, our wishes are prompting us to hope for something different — a government that does not repeat the unwanted history. And they are watching to see if their vote will finally make that happen.

Despite the setbacks, the people of this country should be lauded for their audacity to dream. We continue to hope from the depths of our hearts that we shall truly overcome someday.

By Minhazur Rahman Alvee

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Disclaimer: \*Certain names have been changed upon request

