

Post Election Scenario

By Barrister Harun ur Rashid

Former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

This national election is over. According to unofficial results, at the time of writing, the Awami League- led Grand Alliance won a stunning landslide victory, capturing 261, BNP-led four party alliance 30 and others 4, out of 299 seats. In one seat in Noakhali, the candidate died and election will take place on January 12.

Among the defeated heavyweight- politicians are, Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sarkar, former Ministers M. Saifur Rahman, Dr.Khandker Mosharraf Husain, Barrister Moudud Ahmed, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Abdullah Al Noman, Amir Khasru chowdhury, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Shamsul Islam, Tarikul Islam, Selima Rahman, Matiur Rahman Nizami, Ali Hassan Mujahid, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Major (retd) Abdul Mannan, former President Badruddoza Chowdhury, BNP Secretary General Khandker Delawar Hossain, Dhaka Mayor BNP candidate Sadek Hossain Khoka, Mufti Fazlul Huq Amini, and Kader Siddiqui.

Post-mortem of the results of the election will be conducted in the days ahead. It is reported that Begum Zia on the night of 29th December, after the results were published, met her advisers for strategy how to respond to such a humiliating defeat at the election, when 80% of total voters had cast their votes.

Some commentators have said that BNP is made to pay heavy price for its five years of mis-rule, tainted by corruption by BNP stalwarts. Another factor is the overwhelming majority of new voters have gone against BNP and Jamaat –e- Islami candidates and wanted a change of government, based on 1971 liberation ethos.

Purpose of election:

Election is a means and not the end of a goal of representative democracy where people are sovereign and have the right to change their governments after a scheduled period.

Election is the beginning of a political process where change can now occur in the country-but only if the elected government remains committed to its election-pledges, and work to achieve what is possible.

Politics has more correctly been defined as the "art of the possible," by the German Prussian politician Otto von Bismarck (1815-98). "Good politics" is to find the balance between the desirable and the possible.

In real politics, government does not always achieve what people want because reality imposes limits on government efforts- paucity of financial resources is one of them but people expect government to make efforts in implementing pledges with determination and commitment.

It is this awareness of efforts of government that is doing something good for people separates critics and cynics. People should be able and willing to challenge what is wrong, working to

correct policies and practices that they find deplorable. To bring about the change people seek, they must maintain a critical eye while engaging in the process that makes change possible.

Cynics, on the other hand, are like those sports fans sitting in the chairs, criticising their team's every move, calling for someone else to do something. It's easy to be a cynic, but cynics don't make change.

Hopefully the outcome of the election offers change and new possibilities. It will not be easy, nor can it occur overnight. The change people seek will be incremental, and it is possible.

What people expect from the elected government:

People expect good governance. Governance ordinarily means the process of how decisions are made and how decisions are implemented. Transparency and objectivity in their decision are necessary in spending funds for the welfare of the public.

People expect good leaders must shun direct or indirect influence of relatives, friends and party followers and must not engage themselves in appointing individuals to positions of responsibility regardless of merit.

Since government spends tax payer's money, leaders must understand that the tax payers have the right to know how their money is spent. This is known as accountability that emphasises public should be informed why a particular decision is made and how it is being made. Accountability to people is the hall mark of good governance.

People expect good leadership abides by rule of law. The rule of law is interlinked with democratic norm and in a democratic society, the rights and freedoms are inherent to the human person, the guarantees applicable to them and the rule of law form a triad. Each component defines itself, complements and depends on the others for its meaning.

The rule of law has been considered as one of the key dimensions that determines the quality and [good governance](#) of a country. The rule of law does not mean rule by law.

Laws are made by states but states are themselves subject to the rule of law. Rule of law sets the parameters in which government functions. Cost-effective and easy mechanism must be in place to secure legal protection for individuals against arbitrary excesses of state power.

Equality before the law is an integral part of rule of law. That means law does not discriminate between powerful and weak persons. Enforcement of law must be uniform and strong. Under the rule of law, accuser cannot be at the same time the judge. Independence of judiciary is an important component of the rule of law.

People expect that the elected government addresses huge challenges and some of them are:

- (a) Reduction of Poverty
- (b) Control of population growth

- (c) Inadequacy of health facilities
- (d) Better quality of educational system
- (e) Water security
- (f) Energy security
- (g) Food security
- (h) Personal security
- (i) Environmental security
- (j) Socio-economic development
- (k) Fight against terrorism

Bangladesh is a poor nation. About 49% of its people live below poverty line. In Bangladesh there is a wide disparity of income between rich and poor. Some say about 10% of the rich own 40% of the total land in the country, while poor 10% own only 1.84% of land.

There has not been genuine land reforms and agrarian reforms. Economic growth and development are the same thing.

There are three simple questions to ask to measure development: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all these have declined from high levels, there is a period of development.

It is to this goal that government must now commit to themselves. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty and therefore opposition in the parliament must remain engaged, working with the government to reduce poverty, to provide basic necessities of life, to combat effects of global warming and to fight extremist elements in the country.