



Devising A Way Out Is Important

We have often pointed accusing fingers at the politicians of the country for most of the problems facing it. The conclusion of World Bank's vice-president for South Asia Praful C Patel and the donors who were represented at the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meeting is not far from the trouble spot we have detected. Mr. Patel favours electoral reform, particularly in areas like asset declaration by the candidates for parliamentary election. The financial reform, according to him, should extend to asset declaration by the public officials. The point made is straight and clear. Once the asset is made public, there is little scope for accumulation of unearned wealth.

There are no two opinions on the virtue of this method. Sure enough, not many of our very rich people can properly give the sources of their huge income. For decades unearned income has virtually dominated the national economy. Its size and reach have gone beyond all reasonable proportion. Now that a moneyed class disproportionately cushioned by their ill-gotten wealth has moved up the social ladder, it is difficult to dislodge them from their strongholds. Their money—no matter if that is black—will do the talking for themselves and the influences they will exert can hardly be countered. Yet a rightly devised polls reform can bring about some perceptible changes. Under the prevailing circumstances, no honest and resource-poor candidate can fight a parliamentary election. If the reform does away with pumping of unlimited amount of money into election campaign and the fostering of cadres bent on carrying out the most outrageous instructions, people may enjoy a far more desirable environment to make their minds in favour of their chosen candidate.

The important thing is to create rules and regulations for an even-handed game. Such rules and an environment is simply non-existent in Bangladesh. Neither are the public officials and functionaries accountable to the people. Their wealth has made them arrogant. This trend and culture are what is doing enormous harm to the country's aspiration for a modern, progressive and economically strong nation. A large majority of the people have been deprived of their basic rights and requirements, leaving many of them simply dehumanised. When the majority of the population cannot function upto their potential and are depraved, the nation gets stunted. A small manoeuvring and privileged class does not represent the nation.

We reject the argument that wealth is limited and its equitable distribution could not change the lot of the nation. In fact, discreet investment in human resource could do the trick. The self-serving politicians have set a very despicable example before the nation. It is time now to change the system lock, stock and barrel. Creation of equal opportunities for all is challenging but that should be the ideal. Let us work out a system that guarantees human dignity and equal opportunity for all. Patriotism is an anathema to those who have taken politics as an easy means to serving their own narrow ends. There must be a system that effectively and surely march towards a socio-political goal where such politicians' days are numbered. This done, the country can still be put on the right track.