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Top 10 public perceptions of the day (off the record though...)

November 20, 2011



There is nothing like being part of a political *adda*. These *addas* provide ample content for reflection. These *addas* also reflect public perception. What are the top ten perceptions that haunt the common people today?

Perception No 1

In a conversation with a few close friends and allies who never had a thing against India, I suddenly sensed an anti-Indian tone. The conversation revealed that most of the local hotels were filled with Indians tapping into untapped business potentials in Bangladesh. A few of them, strong followers of the ruling party had also begun to voice their discontent owing to the latest developments with regards to the Indo-Bangladesh reality. The reality is:

-a favourable Teesta solution is still uncertain;

-by violating Article 9 of the Ganges Water sharing treaty of 1996 that states that no state will ever take any unilateral step concerning any shared rivers, the 1500 MW hydroelectric Tipaimukh dam has just started being constructed on the Barak River. A few calming doses of a few products being granted duty free status does not suffice as there are many non tariff barriers to be taken care of.

In brief, many believe, this government is giving in far too much to India than it ought to.

Perception No. 2

Another *adda* posed the question, why doesn't Zobaida (Tarique Zia's wife) come into politics? Maybe that should alter the current corruption image of BNP. There was an instant strong protest against this proposition: Zobaida, in spite of her Mrs. Clean image, by coming into politics will not be any more than an eyewash as Tarique Zia will always be at the helm. Perhaps, Begum Zia should tone her appearance down a bit. She still appears to be out of sync with the '*am janata*' (common people).

And why on earth did she have to plan on giving away free laptops on Tarique Zia's birthday? Was she trying to associate education with his tag of under-educated entity? To make things worse, a credit card being used by Tarique from Mamun's overseas account has just been brought to light. However, minus her sons and minus her diva appearance,



BNP still has a shot.

Perception No. 3

The rulers use and abuse the law. How the law is being used or towards who are the laws being directed is another question. In a seminar captioned: 'Access to Justice', Barrister Rafiqul Haque has recently commented that police is being used by the administration, and human rights is nothing but a mockery in this land.

Many people subscribe to the view that the rule of law applies to only the opposition. Every government uses the judiciary and administration to secure and enhance their power. This, too, is a common perception.

Perception No. 4

Lokman Hossain, the popular mayor who was shot dead in Narsingdi by none other than 'his own people' is also a feeling that the regular people have. The latest arrest in connection to the killing includes a Juba League leader. Out of the six accused, one is a brother of the ex-mayor and district AL vice president Abdul Matin Sarkar. One more unconfirmed name in the list of arrests includes the brother of the posts and telecommunications minister.

Meanwhile, thanks to the administration's over zealous attempts to please the position, Narsingdi BNP unit president Khairul Kabir Khokan has emerged as an overnight hero as he was arrested and then freed on bail a week back after evidences pointed towards him were found out to be not associated with the murder plot. There are reports that someone affiliated with the BNP supplied the arms though.

Perception No. 5

The collapse of the stock market has been a challenge that the current position has been facing. There were rumours of share-gurus buying shares for their friends belonging to the other side of the fence. After all, money has no colour, creed or conviction. That the prime minister had to intervene and take measures to correct the market is also another failure of the high-ups in the cabinet. That people accused of manipulating the market are actually part of the system now is also a negative feeling that the regular people have.

Perception No. 6

The banks are out of cash. The liquidity crisis is hitting the market hard. Yet the honourable PM is confidently stating that the economy is stable. We understand that the ruling party has challenges but by denying the reality, is one actually able to impose the alternate reality on the minds of the people? Isn't this a practice that the voters are familiar with, irrespective of the parties coming to power?

Perception No. 7

The YouTube video of Ambassador Nurul Alam in Oman is perhaps a joke of the century. Ambassador Nim Chandra Bhowmick, in spite of being a huge embarrassment in Nepal is being considered for a pardon. People believe that these are huge deviations that AL should not resort to at this point of time, especially when many ambassadors belonging to the BNP camp had been recalled and punished. The people however believe that these AL ambassadors will also suffer serious consequences when there is a reversal in the power punch. The people feel that victimisation must cease.

Perception No 8

The cabinet is being re-shuffled is a rumour that people have been subjected to for the last six months. After the Padma Bridge episode and the related World Bank refusal to fund the project, the communications minister was supposed to have shown the royal exit but has somehow managed to cling on to the position because of his strong bondage to people close to the PM. This too, is what the people sense. People also believe that it will take a while for the AL lawmakers to beat the records of Hawa Bhaban as the former have merely began the race as late entrants. After all, the art of corruption also takes time to be mastered.

Perception No. 9

The bus driver who killed Mishuk Munier and Tareque Masud has just been released on bail. People wonder, is this how justice works? Is this how blind justice can be? Are there so many loopholes in our system then? Can't the truth beat the system?

Perception No. 10

Our Ex-president Ershad is suddenly sounding defiant and has taken the stand of leaving the alliance with a hope of becoming the sole opposition in the next election. People wonder, if this is a government ploy to alienate BNP as the opposition. People also wonder why political parties compromise on ideals when it comes to the number of seats in the parliaments. What is stronger? The seat or the pledge?

Are perceptions justified?

One needs to resort to logic and philosophy while analysing perceptions. We may agree that by repeating a few idioms, a few statements make history. If a particular speech has no defect or contradiction like the one Bangabandhu delivered on the 7th of March 1971, then truth is established. By listing the public perceptions of the day, one may easily wonder: How does one know that one knows? How does one form perception? Is memory a tool? Has memory or past experience prompted knowledge? At this point, we must remind ourselves that our memory of the past rulers and their periods have remained within us as a proof. If human beings perceive and infer based on memory, then memory-cognition becomes relevant and provides veracity to the perceptions.



At the same time, if people fail to tell the difference between a snake and a rope, then the fault lies with their defective sense organ. Strangely, it is often difficult to assess the truth of a political will, as 'truth' by itself is a hybrid entity. However, there are minimum conditions of adequacy that any account of truth must satisfy without which any speech, any national address, any promise from any political leader is of no consequence. Truth gains relevance only when fact and intellection collaborate. While reading the newspapers of the day and while watching the electronic media, the public forms perceptions, which in turn, form the world within us. Now, this is how the world within us impacts the world around us. This is how we have multiple readers' opinions, protests and critiques.

In the process of democratisation, the public is often told different versions of the truth. In fact, at one point, it may become impossible for the public to differentiate between the fake and the real gem. What does the public do then? The public may just kick the stone to prove that it is real.

Ironically, as much as the public perception may be flawed, the famous concept of the Cartesian "evil demon", a hypothesis of Rene Descartes in 1641 can also be taken into account. The "evil demon" is none other than a personification who is "as clever and deceitful as he is powerful, who has directed his entire effort to misleading me." The "evil demons" play a very tricky part; they may stimulate several people's brains with multiple electrodes and engage in the process so perfectly so that the victims experience a grand dinner while no food is actually laid on the dining table. Such is the magic of leaders. In an event like this, the public is transformed to become naïve realists. It is exactly at this stage that the magician-leaders take advantage of the people, by using tricks to create a false certitude. There are leaders all over who similarly mislead the public and can be categorised, dragged and be brought under this Cartesian tag...

The top ten list of public perception is an outcome of *addas*, casual conversations within familiar, yet informed community. May we humbly request our leaders to kindly not show us the castles in the mist or the cloud? May we also ask them to speak to the public without fear of being ousted from power? After all, while casting the ballot, the public had not expected a magic wand to wash poverty or corruption away. Since perceptions alone can prompt mass unrest, isn't it only realistic for our leaders to open the Pandora's Box and share the ills with the mass? Maybe the public has the tool to pull the last gift of hope out of the box. Perhaps?

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One Response to "Top 10 public perceptions of the day (off the record though...)"



Akhtar Shah on November 21, 2011 at 4:04 am

Very well put, Rubana. Lucky no 7 left me in a state of shock! A plank of wood perhaps would do his job better.

Just bury your head...things would go away!

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