

Low Voter Turnout in Dhaka City Corporation Election is no Accident People are Getting Rid of the Burden of Democracy

News:

Some electoral experts and civil society members have attributed the poor turnout of voters in elections to Dhaka's two city corporations to the people's loss of confidence in the country's electoral system. They also expressed a sense of urgency in urging the Election Commission to find out the reasons why voters, in large majority, shied away from casting their votes in Saturday's elections. The all-EVM (electronic voting machine) city polls had witnessed only a little over 27% vote casting, lowest ever turnout in such elections in the country (*Dhaka Tribune, February 2, 2020*).

Comment:

Saturday's elections in two Dhaka city corporations were no different to the 11th parliamentary polls held in December 2018, and marred by low turnout, show of strength by ruling Awami League and artificial queue of fake voters in front of the polling station to deceive the election observers. According to the Election Commission the voter turnout was less than 25 percent. (*Voter Turnout below 25pc: EC-The Financial Express, 01 February 2020*) Given the intensity of candidates' campaigns, the voter turnout should have been higher. The poor turnout in the city polls speaks volumes of apathy that has developed among people regarding the electoral process and overall democratic system of ruling.

In the previous elections (2015), the average voter turnout in the two city corporations was around 45 percent which clearly shows that people's trust on the current secular-democratic system is diminishing rapidly. There are a number of reasons behind this development. Firstly, the failure of both mayors to solve the basic problems that city dwellers face every day in Dhaka like – Dengue, traffic jam, water supply, waterlogging, sewerage and garbage management, sound and air pollution etc. Dhaka was ranked as second and third least livable city successively in year of 2018 and 2019 and stood next to Lagos and war-torn Damascus (*'Dhaka second least livable city in the world' The Daily Star, 15 Aug 2018*). People understand that these issues are inter-connected and linked with the system of ruling. City mayors being part of the corrupt regime can do little or nothing to solve these issues. Secondly, it is not only in Bangladesh, democratic system of ruling is losing its ground around the world including Western countries like USA and UK due to its inherent flaws and this is evident by the survey conducted by the department of 'Centre of the Future of Democracy' of Cambridge University (*'Dissatisfaction with democracy 'at record high'- BBC News*). People of Bangladesh now rightly understand that picking the lesser of two evils is not a way forward; this actually gives the ruling class to continue their corrupt regime. Finally, the rise of Islamic thoughts as far as running the state affairs and establishing the justice is concerned has played a vital role to drive the people away from the current corrupt form of politics. People are no longer interested in giving any sort of effort to reform this irreparable democratic system. And those who are sincere and conscious know it for sure that only by rejecting this vision-less corrupt capitalist-democratic system and replacing it with the rightly guided Caliphate (Khilafah Rashidah) can truly liberate us from the oppression of the Western imperialists and their local agents.

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