

Bangladesh Elections 2024: US tries to be the Judge

November 17, 2023

Please do read the Editorial Comments on the 2nd and 3rd pages.

November 17, 2023; Dacca: “Even if the **Awami League** (AL) agreed to sit with the **Bangladesh Nationalist Party** (BNP) and others, amidst the ongoing blockades, the BNP's conditions simply do not allow the holding of any meaningful dialogue,” said Mohammad A Arafat, Central Executive Committee member of AL, in response to a letter sent by US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu.

The next general election in Bangladesh is scheduled to be held on January 7, 2024.



*Prime Minister of Bangladesh: **Sheikh Hasina** (from 6th January 2009)*

Earlier, PM of BD from 23 June 1996 to 15 July 2001

President of Awami League from 16th February, 1981

Lu had asked Bangladesh to engage in dialogue with political parties before the general election in Bangladesh, in a letter to **Obaidul Quader**, the Road Transport

and Bridges Minister, handed over by the US ambassador to Bangladesh **Peter Haas** on Wednesday, 15th November 2023.

In a similar letter, the USA also called on the main opposition BNP and **Jatiya Party (JP)** to engage in dialogue to de-escalate violence and find ways for free, fair, and peaceful elections in the country.

Mohammad A Arafat response was on behalf of **AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader**. Arafat's letter was handed over to **Arturo Hines**, acting Deputy Chief of the US embassy, on Thursday, 16th November 2023.

"However, such a dialogue could not be realized as the BNP was, and remains, adamant on the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government as a prerequisite for holding any such dialogue," Arafat's letter adds. It further said currently the BNP and its like-minded parties, like **Jamaat-e-Islami**, are holding political programs like **blockades** and using **arson attacks** to enforce the blockades.

Arafat has also sent a letter to **US Secretary of State Antony Blinken**, urging him to take action against BNP leaders for their statements aimed at obstructing the forthcoming national election in Bangladesh. The letter also mentioned that the AL **values its partnership with all international friends** and hopes that they will offer all cooperation in presenting to the people of Bangladesh a free and fair election in a peaceful environment.

The export \$11 Bn of garments every year forms more than 75% of Bangladesh's exports. A large part of the exports is to the US market. Hence, USA has a great deal of influence on Dacca.

In Bangladesh, AL and BNP are heading coalitions of like-minded parties, with the AL leading the secular and liberal elements while the BNP is rallying the right-of-center parties.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS: www.DiGiNews360.com would prefer if AL were to win, since the BNP and its other radical Islamist parties are not parties, which look at the humanity as a single brotherhood.

*China wants to have **client states in South and East Asia**. China has invested an estimated \$10 Bn in Bangladesh, including on **Sylhet International Airport**. When **Ram Madhav of India Foundation** and a*

senior official of the ruling party in India called on PM Sheikh Hasina at her official residence **Ganabhaban** on March 19, 2023, **PM Sheikh Hasina** told him that “India can use our Chattogram and Sylhet ports if they want.” The Chhattogram port is strategically located and use of the port and the Sylhet airport can improve the connectivity to India’s north-eastern States. This may make India as a major beneficiary of the Sylhet airport.

From India’s point of view, BNP is both anti-India and anti-Hindus in Bangladesh. Till the people of Bangladesh set up another secular party, www.DiGiNews360.com, India and in fact the entire democratic world, would like AL to rule Bangladesh.

----**BACKGROUNDER on Political Parties in Bangladesh**----

1. **Bangladesh Awami League (AL)**: Led by **Sheikh Hasina**: The AL is an alliance of center-left and secularist parties. It has been in power since 2009.
2. **Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)**: Led by **Khaleda Zia**, the BNP is an alliance of center-right and **Islamist parties**. It has been in power twice, from 1991 to 1996 and from 2001 to 2006. It is perceived to be anti-Hindus in Bangladesh.
3. **Jatiya Party (JP)**: Led by **Hussain Muhammad Ershad**, the JP is a **center-right** party that often plays a kingmaker role in parliament. It has been in power twice, from 1982 to 1990 and from 1991 to 1996.
4. **Bangladesh Tariqat Federation (BTF)**: The BTF is a small **Islamist party** that has been allied with the BNP in the past. It has a limited presence in parliament.
