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Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina should listen to Aristotle



Aristotle once remarked that all forms of government—democracy, oligarchy, monarchy, tyranny—are inherently unstable, that all political regimes are inherently transitional, that the stability of all regimes is "corrupted by the corrosive power of time." To prolong the viability of the democratic system, his advice to the Athenian democracy had been rapid turnover of leaderships—constant changing of guards before rot creeps in." Aristotle believed only the democratic form of government could regenerate itself by constant change and renewal.

What was true to the Athenian democracy in ancient Greece remains germane in a fledgling democracy like Bangladesh today. After many years in both government and opposition both Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and former Prime Minister and now leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina are showing the signs of the "corrosive power of time." Time for renewal of democracy in Bangladesh has come and they should listen to the great sage of the antiquity and step aside, allowing new leaders to take over. If they want to retain the family tradition, they should pass the

torch to their sons if they have leadership qualities. There is nothing wrong with dynastic democracy. U.S. President John Adams was followed by his son John Adams Jr., President George W. Bush is the son of President George Bush, aspiring presidential candidate Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton is the wife of former President Bill Clinton and the legendary Kennedy family members are always in politics. The progenies of powerful politicians can successfully carry the burden of leadership if they are motivated by public service and not simply by the prospect of wielding power for personal ends. Politics in Bangladesh has degenerated into squabbles between two longstanding leaders and parliamentary politics has been replaced by street fighting between their supporters. Let's hope their children will bring about the needed change and renewal without which democracy might itself degenerate into oligarchy what the great sage of the antiquity warned long ago. Aristotle also said: "Man is a political animal in a sense in which a bee is not, or any other gregarious animal. ... For man is the best of all animals when he has reached his full development, so he is the worst of all when divorced from law and justice. Though man is born with abilities which he can use in the service of practical wisdom and virtue, it is all too easy for him to use them for opposite purposes." This is why power in democracy must not be exercised for personal gratification and for too long.

Mahmood Elahi
Ottawa, Canada

National interest in our politics

We always blame various movements of G. W. Bush and Tony Blair but have we ever thought how much shameful the political environment of our country has become? Here, one noteworthy thing is, the contrivance in European and American politics is graceful of national interest, which is quite absent in our politics. In a democratic country there should be position and opposition parties but it does not mean that, the parties should never come to unanimity. In Bangladesh, although having a democratic constitution our political parties are never in agreement, not even for national interest. Recently, some issues on the reform of electoral system and caretaker government have been the matter of political conflict. But I cannot understand, if a successful election is in nation's interest then why there shall be any delay, debate and conflict between the political parties on its implementation. In a democracy the political parties can rebel against any misdeed and wrong decision of ruling party but not through any illogical and detrimental activity though our opposition parties have chosen 'hartal' like vicious activity as a language of their protest. Hartal gives us nothing except loss, it devastates our national assets, makes obstruction in the way of nation's development. In such a condition, can I not say there is lack of national interest in our politics? From my point of view, the politicians have to be much concerned of each national issue and they have to work in favour of various national interests.

Mehedi Hassan, BUBT, Mirpur

University Grants Commission

Very recently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has asked all the universities to initiate grading system for publishing all kinds of results. I, as a student, express my deep concern about this new step. Any commercial product launched in the market needs to be packed in an attracting manner with all the necessary details about its excellence and applications. Still, consumers are always concerned about the actual quality of the product. We may consider our education system as a huge production engine, producing thousands of graduates every year. Just like a commercial product, a graduate needs an attracting detail about himself, so that he can introduce himself in the job market. Our certificates and mark sheets provide that detail. In brief, our education system in producing brilliant graduates, and their certificates tell us about how brilliant they actually are. By introducing the grading system, we will only manage to make our certificates look more attractive. But we should be more concerned about the quality of the graduates themselves. Our concern should be about the education structure that needs a lot of changes. Is our education system capable of appreciating the grading system? With our education system still traditional, what shall we do with the modern result system? These are the questions that should be taken into consideration immediately. In the newly introduced grading system, the highest grade, namely A+ has been set at 80% of marks. But it is known to all that most of the public universities follow traditional system, where the highest grade is called 1st class, meaning 60% of

marks. In these universities, a 60% mark is good, 65% is very good and 70% is superb! Now how is UGC going to enable the students to obtain 80% of marks? Is there any such plan whatsoever? It seems like UGC is keen to enable the grading system, but doesn't care about the entire education structure that this grading system is going to represent! Isn't it similar to retrieving the corrupted policemen's image by changing their uniform? A grading system requires quite a few changes in the education structure. Total marks against each course should be divided into three parts: class attendance, tutorials/class-tests and the final exam. Usually, class attendance and tutorials altogether carry 30% marks. It is possible for a student to get 30 out of 30 here. This provides a chance of getting good marks. Again, an academic year should be divided into at least two semesters. But more class-tests and semesters mean more exams. The authority of any institution cannot make these changes in a day. It needs a huge rearranging in the internal structure, which will take a lot of time. Many institutions may also show reluctance in making these changes. But then students will suffer. For instance, a 1st class 1st of a department may obtain around 75% marks, but in grading system it will hardly go beyond 3.5. I feel that there should be some clear advice from UGC about what kind of internal changes it expects from the institutions and within what period of time the changes have to be made. Then and only then this grading system can do any good to the students. I, therefore, urge the UGC authority to first initiate changes in the educational structure, so that it becomes compatible with the grading system.

Anik Iqbal
Dhaka University

Tribute to a teacher

Prof. A.H. Sajedur Rahman breathed his last at his Banani residence on April 24. His Namaz-e-Janaja was held at 11:45AM at the premises of Dhaka Dental College at Mirpur on April 26. I was one of his students while I was admitted to Dhaka Dental College on June 6, 1976. I was again fortunate to meet this extraordinary academician in 1985 while I was doing my post-graduate diploma in dentistry in this country. After relentless endeavour, he almost single-handedly introduced the Diploma in Dental Science (DDS) curriculum - the then only post-graduate course in dentistry with Dhaka University. Although there are a host of such post graduate courses available now, he was the pioneer of post-graduate dental education in this country. He showed dexterity in literature and music as well. Besides writing texts, he authored a good number of fictions and thrillers under the penname of 'Kuasha'. He was a famous lyricist in the 60s and a good number of his songs were composed by Azad Rahman and various other music composers. He translated Arabian Nights and the Holy Qur'an.

To me he was an institution and at his demise, a history-maker entered into the pages of history. But his name will be remembered as long as dentistry in our country survives. May Allah grant him eternal peace. Dr. M. U. Chowdhury BDS, DDS, Ph.D Assoc. Professor Sapporo Dental College, Uttara, Dhaka

It was his untiring efforts that compelled the students to study hard. In the lecture theatre, he had equal commands in both the basic and clinical subjects. For example, just after finishing one lecture on Dental Materials, he rushed to take lecture on Dental Anatomy. On another occasion, while going to take a lecture for the 3rd year students, he was found to deliver a lecture for the 4th year students

while passing through the corridors. Those who knew avoided the corridor carefully during intervals.

He disliked to sit idle and while away time. When he was transferred to IPGMR he did not waste time and started thinking how to start postgraduate education in dentistry in this country. After relentless endeavour, he almost single-handedly introduced the Diploma in Dental Science (DDS) curriculum - the then only post-graduate course in dentistry with Dhaka University. Although there are a host of such post graduate courses available now, he was the pioneer of post-graduate dental education in this country.

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Iran conundrum



I have read Michael Hirsh's "A Radioactive Dilemma" and Mahmood Sariolghalam's "Cutting a Deal With Tehran", two pregnant write-ups on Iran issue published in NEWSWEEK, April 24 issue. At present Iranian nuke issue is a tricky matter for the whole world. The gung-ho and bolshevik doctrine of Bush Administration and the provocative remarks of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad worry the people of the world. Iran is a highly individualistic and nationalistic country. It is affluent in natural resources and cultural history. It is sound in military clout. But the present Iranian president is very conservative, dogmatic and truculent. He could not handle the nuclear issue diplomatically; rather his provocative statements about Holocaust and Israel irk all. He showed parochialism in his political notion. It has trade relation with China and Russia, but not with Germany,

France and Britain. Mr Mahmoud Ahmadinejad failed to apply real politic to gain support from other country. Iran argued that it was adopting uranium enrichment program only for civilian purpose, but the recent declaration of being a member of the elite nuclear club of the world has made the West sceptical. Actually, Bush wants the regime change in Iran that will ensure the security of Israel in the Middle East and Bush would be able to satiate his energy hunger setting his poodle in Iran. But Mr Bush should keep in mind that Iran is not Iraq, Iran must adopt "Tit for tat" policy, if it is attacked anyway. So to forestall any catastrophe the Big-5 should come forward to resolve this problem, otherwise everyone will be scapegoat.

Molla Mohammad Shaheen, Dept of English, DU

Hideous shadow in Bangla movies

Like literature, movies usually convey the traditional, historical, cultural and religious aspects of particular country. From this point of view, there is no doubt to say that Bangla movies are the reflection of our life and us. But it is really true with the current trend of Bangla movies? A dreadful shadow is covering the previous glory of Bangla movies. An odd truth is, a class of audience have left the cinema hall, they become interested in Indian and western movies. But is it their guilt? I think not so, because when our movies

are incapable to bear any message of the life and culture the people may have to borrow entertainment from foreign culture. But who and what are culpable for this disgraceful condition? I think a group of evil and greedy filmmakers and inactive authority are responsible for this disdain of Bangla movies. Instead of our cultural identity the movies are the expression of vulgarity. I cannot imagine when other countries are spreading their culture, tradition and literature through the movies, at the same time our filmmakers

seem busy to defame our culture and literature. In such a condition, my only request to each member of the authority is that if they have a single bit of nationalism in their heart then please seek to recover the previous glory of Bangla movies. Recently some good movies produced by different private channels and young film makers have proved our ability. MD. Mehedi Hassan. Ibrahimpur Dhaka cant. Dhaka

Exposure to tear gas



Demonstrators have been widely exposed to tear gas in our country for many years and recently we have witnessed massive use of tear gas on opposition protesters. This chemical weapons may also be used by authorities in the

forthcoming demonstrations especially before general election. Teargas is although a no lethal incapacitating agent, it is useful to have some understanding of what it is and how to combat it. Consequently, I find it necessary to pub-

lise scientific information on its danger to health.

Police as a means for dispersing mobs in our country normally uses teargas. It causes temporary physical disability like blindness through the excessive flow of tears resulting from irritation of the eye. The Compounds that cause lachrimation (watering of the eye) include bromoacetone, benzyl bromide, chloroacetophenone, ethyl iodacetate, chloropicrin bromobenzyl cyanide, and bromine-substituted xylenes.

- If you are exposed to any of the agents, you may experience:
 - Stinging, burning in your eyes, nose, mouth and skin
 - Excessive tearing, causing your vision to blur
 - Running nose
 - Increased salivation
 - Coughing and difficulty in breathing
 - Disorientation, confusion and sometimes panic
 - The good news is that all this is temporary. Discomfort from tear gas usually

disappears after 5-30 minutes. The effects diminish sooner with treatment. Of course, for most healthy people the effects of tear gas are temporary. However, for some people the effects can be long lasting and threatening. People with the conditions listed below should be aware of these risks and may want to try and avoid exposure.

- People with respiratory diseases, such as asthma, emphysema, etc. risk exacerbation, or permanent damage, if exposed.
- Vulnerable people such as infants, the elderly, and the immune compromised risk intensified and possibly life-threatening responses.
- Anyone with chronic health conditions or those on medications that weaken the immune system, (ie: chemotherapy, Lupus, HIV, radiation, or long-term corticosteroids such as prednisone) risk exacerbation of illness, intensified response and possible delayed recovery.
- Women who are or could be pregnant, or who are trying to get pregnant, may be

at risk of spontaneous abortion, or increased risk of birth defects.

- Nursing mothers risk passing toxins on to their infant.
- People with skin conditions (ie: severe acne, psoriasis, or eczema) and eye conditions (ie: conjunctivitis or uveitis) risk an intensified response.
- People wearing contact lenses may experience increased eye irritation and damage due to chemicals being trapped under the lenses.
- If some body is really unable to escape from the toxic effect of tear gas and he is to cope with that some practical advices are given here.
 - Clothing
 - Shatter-resistant eye protection (e.g. sunglasses, swim goggles, or gas mask)
 - Bandana to cover nose and mouth soaked in water or vinegar, it can aid breathing during chemical exposure.
 - Heavy duty gloves if you plan to handle hot tear gas canisters.
 - Fresh clothes in plastic bag (in case yours get contaminated by chemical

weapons)

- What to bring:
 - Lots of water in a plastic bottle with squirt or spray top, to drink and to wash your skin and eyes if need be.
 - Water or alcohol based sunscreen.
 - More water (the usefulness of water cannot be emphasised enough!)
 - What not to do:
 - Don't put vaseline, mineral oil, oil-based sunscreen or moisturisers on skin as they can trap chemicals.
 - Don't wear contact lenses, which can trap irritating chemicals underneath.
- Although about seventeen countries have banned using tear gas, we people of third world country are still compelled to consume its severe toxic effects. It is high time to think critically and find out any alternative means to disperse the agitated mob without lobbing teargas shell.

MD. Nazmul Alam
Lecturer, Department of Chemistry
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet

