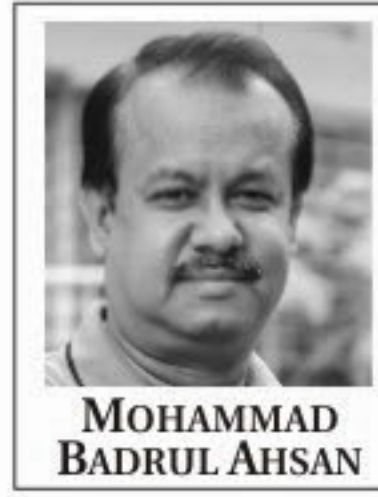


## CROSS TALK



MOHAMMAD  
BADRUL AHSAN

**K**HONDOKER Delwar Hossain has passed away. He died in a far-away country where he was undergoing treatment. From there

he moved further away to another world where he may not have memories of contentious politics of which he was a leading force. Many people would disagree and argue that he was rather a spent force, his grip on the party slipping away with growing signs of aging and diminished influence.

English poet John Donne wrote: "Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind." Delwar's death should diminish individual politicians in this country, because they are involved in the same politics. In the same poem, the poet reminds us: "Therefore, send not to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee."

Once again the death of another leading politician proves that the politicians are also mortal. Death is almost as unpredictable as a politician's mind. It can strike anybody anywhere almost any time. But aging brings the certainty to death like maturity does to encashment of savings instruments. And lot of our leaders are aging, the leading lights of this nation's political discourse that has only gone from confusion to further confusion.

It is said that as people grow older they become more aware of that fatality. Older people slow down; they become less ambitious and withdraw themselves from worldly affairs. Sagging skin, aching bones, dwindling eyesight, diseases and debilities remind them that the end is drawing near. Nobody is talking about that Caesarean aplomb that cowards die many times before their death. It's alright that one is only as old as one thinks. Still age has its own gravitational pull on mind as lunar eclipse affects tides.

How does it work on our politicians? Or, does it work at all? We hear about

politicians getting in and out of hospitals, many of them lucky to be living on borrowed time. But does it have an effect on them? Do they give it a second thought? Does it even cross their minds how they would like to be remembered once they are gone?

engineers. May be lawyers don't think like priests, police like army, or service holders like businessmen.

Politicians need to deal with this entire spectrum, and may be they need to be like they are, a regression line of varied mood swings of equally

ative.

Still many of them are God-fearing. They practice religion, say prayers, perform pilgrimage, and believe in life after death. Mahatma Gandhi said: "Men say I am a saint losing himself in politics. The fact is that I am a politician trying my hardest to become a saint." It's hard to place our politicians within that range. They remain politicians all their life for all that is worth it, their adrenaline rushing with the plotting, the planning, and the calculating to seize power and defeat their opponents. Sainthood is hardly their cup of tea.

One would only like to think what the flock thinks when one of them is withdrawn from this incessant game. They will attend the funeral; pay their last respects to their dead colleague. Some of them will give sound bites to some television channels. And, then what is next? Do they ever think of their own finality?

Delwar's mortal remains have returned to this country, where he may not have died but where he had lived all his life. This will also be the fate of our numerous politicians who have bought second, third or, for that matter, many homes in foreign countries. In the end, only the people of this country will mourn their death. They will be laid to rest in their home soil only.

Most of our leaders are above sixty, many pushing seventy, even eighty. What is their last thought when they go to sleep at night? Do they think of death or do they think of another deal? Is this how they are going to leave this country -- divided, disenchanted, distressed and diminished?

Another death merely reconfirms that time is running out on them. Fortunate amongst us, they rose to positions in life when they could make a difference. They have still got the time. Before the microphone is switched off, the podium is gone, and the lips are sealed forever, they can reconcile their differences and give us hope.

All of us want a peaceful country, where they will rest in peace.

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# For whom the bell tolls



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*They have still got the time. Before the microphone is switched off, the podium is gone, and the lips are sealed forever, they can reconcile their differences and give us hope.*

There is this famous saying that different people inhabit different worlds. Different minds also inhabit different bodies. Good or bad, may be politicians don't think like the rest of us. May be doctors don't think like

varied personalities. It is possible that politicians need to become all things to all people, different strokes for different folks, which explains why they are elusive, deceptive, flexible, unpredictable, unreliable and talk-

welfare oriented. They also want to be assured that there will be no scope for one leader to remain in power for an indefinite period. Nobody should be allowed to hold office for more than two terms, and the duration of each term should be decided in the parliament at first, then a referendum should be held to obtain the verdict of the majority of the people.

Popular upheavals in Tunisia and Egypt have revealed that those who

Z.A. KHAN

**S**PONTANEOUS revolutions in the Middle East (ME) and North Africa have once again brought to the fore the fact that when nations are pushed to the wall by repression and poor governance, they bounce back fearlessly for a face-off. Many countries across the globe are in a pot-boiling situation and are waiting for a spark. One wonders how a man can handle intricate state affairs for years in a row. Dictators and monarchs start their regimes with high sounding pledges of redemption and reform and in most instances end up vilified and vulnerable.

Most of the long serving dictators assumed power by coups d'etat, taking advantage of deteriorating law and order and diminishing economic power of the citizens. Experience reveals that most of the coup makers were young and were largely provoked by vested quarters. In the ME, North Africa and South America the powers that be have been playthings of the affluent West, who either wanted to dominate world politics or to plunder the countries' resources.

Once Western governments find that a certain government in which they have interest is not toeing their line, they foment turmoil there and nourish it till it snowballs. The military, which generally remain non-partisan, are often forced by the prevailing circumstance to assume the responsibility of governing the country. When this detached body gets to know the strength of state power, they plan to lengthen their grip on the power. Soon, they float a political party and create a situation that politicians either find lucrative and join the new leadership, or are bound to join for the fear of being persecuted because of their hazy past track record.

These politicians misguide the mili-

tary leaders who are not well acquainted with the intrigue in politics, and ultimately become pawns in the hands of these politicians who generally leave no stone unturned to prolong their continuance in power. Military leaderships that assume power by overthrowing the legal government always want to acquire indemnity and therefore cling to their political colleagues to obtain their support for that. This is why the military leadership in state power is coerced by the politicians with impunity.

The military leadership, who do not

*Popular upheavals in Tunisia and Egypt have revealed that those who fail to bring about reforms to democratise the parties and national politics will be thrown into the wilderness by popular movements which may end up in violence and bloodshed.*

generally have a feeling of the people's pulse, remain content with the showcased popularity which is arranged by some politicians by resorting to deceit and trickery. Often, they fail to assess the situation and hold on to power for years in a row, denying the people's democratic rights. Vested quarters that are eager to rule without being chased for transparency conspire to crush any opposition by hook or by crook. Who does not know that one cannot fool

everybody for all the time? People who are denied justice, fair play and political rights, react fearlessly once they are pushed to the wall.

The people of the ME and North Africa have exploded because of the years of misrule, corruption and denial by the long serving dictators, most of whom captured state power by coup d'etat or were installed in power by the military. Although these diehard dictators gave their respec-



fail to bring about reforms to democratise the parties and national politics will be thrown into the wilderness by popular movements which may end up in violence and bloodshed.

People everywhere are now demanding drastic reforms to make the constitution participatory, democratic and

fail to bring about reforms to democratise the parties and national politics will be thrown into the wilderness by popular movements which may end up in violence and bloodshed.

The writer is a former Director General, BISS.

## Submission of wealth report

*Basic prerequisite for transparency*

**T**HE Awami League government has at long last decided to fulfil the party's election pledge to submit wealth statement with sources of income indicated by cabinet ministers and lawmakers.

Though it has taken about two years for the government to come to a firm position on the matter, the present move is commendable, as it would at least be a beginning of what has been long overdue. Once implemented in full, the measure hopefully will go some way in ensuring accountability and transparency in the governance. And such a step from the topmost echelon of the administration will definitely create the instance for all senior government officials to be respectful to the obligation.

The immediate past ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), too, had made in its party manifesto a similar promise to submit wealth statement by ministers and lawmakers. But after assuming office they conveniently forgot their pledge. Though it is a standard practice in democracies, our past elected governments failed to introduce it during their terms in office. The ministers of the present government, too, were not so much in favour of the idea with the excuse that they had already submitted their wealth statements to the Election Commission (EC). But good sense has prevailed.

Now that the process is finally set to start, it is hoped that all public office holders, both elected and unelected, should abide by the formalities.

We would like to remind the government that the ruling party's manifesto further states that the wealth report to be submitted by the ministers and lawmakers would be made public. But the finance minister AMA Muhith's disclosure Wednesday did not mention it. So it is expected that the reports will be made public through the Jatiya Sangsad (JS).

The authorities need to note that the wealth report placement by high government functionaries does not become purely mechanical and ritualistic. That calls for making it verifiable. Only a well-thought-out and self-contained mechanism designed for the purpose can fulfil such criteria. Hopefully, this aspect of the wealth reports would be well looked into.

## Preserve Parliament's sanctity

*Dignified deportment missing*

**I**T seems that good words have taken leave of some of the members of the parliament. We do not expect the lawmakers to indulge in unspeakable utterances and vituperative statements which have little relevance to national issues. We are utterly stunned and indeed unhappy to note the manner in which the time of the parliament is being wasted on making insensate comments and personal attacks.

It is regrettable that this happened despite the best efforts of the Speaker who at the end was forced to expunge some of the remarks and words. What we have seen and heard spewing from the mouth of some of the members belonging to both sides of the floor has helped only to denigrate the dignity of the House.

It has been a long time that the house was without the opposition. And one had hoped that the issues that are in front of the nation would be given priority and would generate heat, but not in the manner that it has.

It should not escape the notice of MPs that they are live on the TV and their demeanour is not only under public scrutiny, what they speak and the manner in which they convey their thoughts also have an impact on the minds of many about politics and politicians that cannot be positive.

Our plea to the parliamentarians would be that they keep in mind that both their time and people's money would be well served by addressing the pressing national issues, of which there are many. One would hope that apart from the chief whips, who must bring to bear their influence on their respective members to behave in a more dignified manner, both the leaders must set examples of temperance, dignity and self respect inside the

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

March 18

**1229** Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor declares himself King of Jerusalem during the Sixth Crusade.

**1915** World War I: Massive naval attack in Battle of Gallipoli. Three battleships are sunk during a failed British and French naval attack on the Dardanelles.

**1922** Mohandas Gandhi sentenced to six years in prison for civil disobedience. He would serve only 2 years.

**1940** World War II: Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini meet at the Brenner Pass in the Alps and agree to form an alliance against France and the UK

**1942** The War Relocation Authority is established in the United States to take Japanese Americans into custody.

**1945** World War II: 1,250 American bombers attack Berlin.

**1965** Russian Cosmonaut Aleksei Leonov becomes the first person to walk in space.

**1992** White South Africans vote overwhelmingly to end Apartheid.

**1994** Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina established after Bosnians and Croats sign the Washington Agreement

**2002** U.S. invasion of Afghanistan: Operation Anaconda ends (started on March 2) after killing 500 Taliban and al Qaeda fighters with 11 allied troop fatalities.