

BITTER TRUTH



THERE are times when some event is so enormous in terms of the attention it demands that everything else pales in comparison. The dialogue between the president and the political parties over the formation of the EC has assumed such significance. This is because people do

not want to see a rigged, flawed or poorly conducted election. Just before the incumbent EC took over, the practice of fake voter list preparation and rigging election result had hit the institution that should be above controversy.

History abounds with instances of great leaders imbued with statesmanship and pragmatism playing a very crucial role in setting the record straight and saving their country from ignominy. At the moment, the ruling party and the opposition are caught in a crisis of unusual dimensions with the possibility of either rising to the occasion or failing. We only wish that wisdom prevails and we advance to the next polls with prudence. The recent comment of the AL secretary general that his party would be willing to participate in a dialogue on the CTG issue should the president take such move in a bid to break the lingering impasse. This might be an opening for the president to stem the rot before it engulfs the whole nation.

Most importantly, the president needs to take control of the political moves so that the country can go back to constructive work in the next two years, like redeeming the pledges made to the people by the ruling AL, ensuring a hazard-free investment climate and business activities that will set the road map for a free, fair and credible election. What the people apprehend is that the ongoing protests in the form of road shows that are still peaceful might turn into bloody conflict.

History has taught us that the response to divisive politics, resentment and violence whether in intent, strategy and action rooted in mass demands was always counterproductive. In spite of the fact that our history or of the world is replete with instances of bringing down of monarchs or dictators repression of freedom-loving people still continued. Some persons and political parties, fired by arrogance and inspired by sycophants, tend to believe that they could occupy the hot seat without ever getting burnt.

After the nightmarish experience of the past years, we need to reassess our strength and the consequences of ignoring public opinion. People in power and authority might recall the great verdict that former Justice Jaspal Singh of the Indian Supreme Court wrote in an eloquent judgment in a public litigation case. Justice Singh wrote:

"Power intoxicates the best hearts, as wine the strongest head, but then nobody can thrive on money, muscle, corruption, lies, deception and false promises."

Much to the citizens' disappointment, the talks that President Zillur Rahman initiated with 23 political parties on the formation of the EC bypassed the main agenda and centered round the restoration of the CTG. BNP's stance that it would not accept the formation of the EC without restoration of the CTG has given enough

national crisis, join the parliament session without imposing any condition and put forward its viewpoints even if it has to face stiff opposition from the ruling party.

The president's move to send a proposal to the government for a search committee for the formation of a new EC in line with the proposal of the incumbent EC is most welcome, but the search committee must include some of the best minds of the nation, not affiliated with any political party other than those stipulated by both

Moreover, the task for the new EC, or even a CTG if instituted again, would become much easier because of the improvements the incumbent EC has brought about by introducing National ID card, vigilant election monitoring before and during polls, and the last and most important of all, vote casting by EVM. The days of stuffing the ballot boxes with fake votes and resorting to manipulation while counting the votes and declaring the result are definitely bitter memories of the past.

The stage has been set for a clean election battle in the days to come. No one, either an individual or anyone belonging to a political party, can harbour any misgivings about the effectiveness of the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM). In the age of digital technology, it would be nothing short of foolishness and ignorance if we refuse to accept the advancement of technology. BNP's refusal to accept this technology in the national election must be backed by technically acceptable points, and not based on flimsy grounds just to gain political points.

But machines or technology cannot always deliver the best result. People realise that the man behind the machine is also as much important. In view of the bitter memories of the past, people feel that in absence of tough and neutral persons in both CTG and EC, improvement in the election process may be wishful thinking, and that poorly-conducted elections will not resolve the contentious issues but only destabilise the country further.

The country has begun to look quite helpless with debts deepening, forex earning plummeting, services falling apart, crime and drugs peddling rising and, the most vicious of all, academic institutions becoming non-functional as a consequence of murderous activities in the campuses. In a word, a sinking feeling has taken over the whole nation. But leadership in such a crisis is a superhuman quality that must be called into play. There is no doubt that all crises are consequences of blunders we have committed earlier.

Since most people are mute spectators, politics, perhaps in its worst form, is a free ground for many whose vision does not go beyond their personal gains. The great potential for progress that was envisaged is fading out, giving in to chaos and violence everywhere.

With prospects so bleak, it would be irresponsible to continue politics of aggrandisement. Our buoyant hopes for progress and prosperity can still be resuscitated if, without further delay, the country is brought back on track, which can only be done by bringing sanity into our political leadership.

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MCMILLAN DIGITAL ART

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indication that the nation is faced with a grave crisis, possibly leading to confrontational politics in the days ahead. The ruling party has an obligation to the nation to break this impasse.

The president might advise the PM to start discussion in the forthcoming session of the parliament on the restoration of the CTG as stipulated in the Supreme Court Appellate Division verdict (made public only in the form of a order sheet). BNP must, at this moment of

the EC and the president. If the ruling party can create an atmosphere of accommodation, it will bring them rich dividends later.

Despite some disastrous failings in the development sector and infrastructure development and an apparent failure to bring about improvement in the law and order situation, the ruling party did not interfere in the activities of the EC, as is clear from analysis of the mayoral elections in Chittagong, Narayanganj and Comilla.

Shameful acts at Jahangirnagar University

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

JAHANGIRNAGAR University has made a habit of hitting the press for all the wrong reasons; on January 12 it was supposed to celebrate its 41st birthday, and the celebratory news that was supposed to appear on the following day was replaced by the news of a scuffle that broke out during a teachers' association meeting, leaving the newly elected President of JU Teachers' Association assaulted. Prof.

Mamun Hossain is one of the most celebrated physicists that JU can be proud of; instead of celebrating his feat, he appears in news media as a defeated man. Where will I hide my shame? JU VC Prof. Sharif Enamul Kabir is a fellow of Royal Academy of Science with brilliant academic credentials, yet he has been dubbed as a "god-father" (Bangladesh Protidin, Jan 13). Where will I hide my shame?

The university is still mourning the death of Zubair, who was brutally murdered last week. Zubair's death could have been explained as an internecine clash of two groups of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL). (Un)fortunately, the central committee of BCL does not even consider the validity of its JU wing, and Zubair had been keeping his distance from politics for the last one year. So who are the hooligans in the campus who carried out the attack on one of their former colleagues and friends? Who are the students who can wield power even after their central power supply is cut off?

Two of the students allegedly involved in the killing have already been arrested; the situation demanded scapegoats apparently two pawns had been sacrificed to secure the king in a game

of chess. But why does education have to be an enactment of power in which students and teachers engage in power tussle? Why does university have to be a site of fear?

The fear of insecurity in the world is a constant quantity. Anyone who secures himself by wielding power makes someone else insecure somewhere else. So while some in JU are trying to secure their position, the other stakeholders of JU are feeling insecure. The tactics of divide and rule, creating diversions, and providing smoke-screens are time-tested and tried; the lizards shed off their wagging tails, for example. JU is no different. There are

ient. It is not only known for its scenic beauty but also for its courage and determination that kept ICS away and contributed to an anti-sexual-harassment policy. Can JU be the pioneering public university to ban all forms of campus politics? Is it possible to be politically conscious without affiliating oneself with any factional politics?

Theoretically, none of the political bodies are linked to the central power organ. In the age of Bluetooth, you probably do not need cable connection to be linked to your motherboard. The events at JU suggest that some people are flexing muscles

because they get support from a distance. Maybe, the killers of Zubair waited for the last exam to treat him a lesson so others of his kind are deterred from entering the campus. Reportedly, Zubair had verbal permission from the JU administration to sit for exams.

Maybe the protection shield expired without the knowledge of the latest victim of campus politics.

You cannot have a proctor who fails in his duty to provide security to one of his students, and then allegedly assaults a colleague. You cannot have an administration that feels regionalism or factionalism is the litmus paper with which you test your loyalty. Read again: University has a universe in it.

These are the issues that are bothering the minds of JU teachers, students and staff alike. JU is a small part of the national body. But if a tooth aches, the whole body suffers. If JU is in pain, the whole country suffers. If there is a bad tooth, you pull it out; that is the sane thing to do!

The writer, a former teacher of Jahangirnagar University, taught English at Dhaka University.

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many wagging tails all around that the agitating stakeholders of JU need to be wary of.

The death of final year Honours student Zubair has made everyone anxious. In 1990, the stakeholders of JU got together and drove out Islamic Chhatra Shibir from the campus. JU did not consider the fact that the sponsors of ICS at that time were the alliance of then government BNP. The stakeholders of JU did not fear the aggression of Manik! Those who tried to secure their treasure saw a regime change instead.

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IN MEMORIAM Kazi: The intrepid freedom fighter

TAWFIQ-E-ELAHI CHOWDHURY

KAZI Kamaluddin Ahmed Bir Bikram, popularly known as Kazi, was laid to rest on Monday, January 16, in his ancestral home in Kaliakor in a tree-lined clearing of what must have been a forest once, bathed in the crimson glow of winter afternoon in the womb of the mother he fought so valiantly to liberate four decades back. The Intrepid Kazi, the incarnation of dare and gusto, fell silent as bugles played the last post and the birds sang a lullaby.

Returning from the front after the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, we heard of stories of the raids by a crack platoon of young daredevils in the heart of Dhaka city, thought by the Pak army as their bastion. This small band of freedom fighters not only took on the enemy, armed to the teeth with no-holds barred to silence us with death and torture, but also drove terror in their hearts. Kazi was one of them.

While some of us who grew up in Dhakathe pristine pasture of our endearment and romance wanted to fight the enemy in the city they had viled with blood and tears, we were left to content ourselves in the distant western fronts. With a sense of jealousy we admired Kazi's group who did our proxy fights, executed with courage, speed and ingenuity we could not have accomplished. They upheld our honour.

Occasionally, over the years, I would sit down with Kazi to hear his exploits in the War which he narrated in a matter of fact way, typical of him. I knew how much guts it took to drive a car through the citycheck-posts everywhere with order to shoot at will with cocked stenguns and bumping-off one after another of the Pak army's secured posts. At the end they could not keep their cover and Jewel, Bodhi and others paid with their lives. Kazi was lucky and

his bravado paid off. On a monsoon night, cordoned by the Pak army in what was their safe hideout house in Dhanmondi, Kazi did the impossible. He kicked one of the Pak army jawans off balance as they stood guard with guns pointed at them and made his way out through a hail of bullets.

He had another close shave with death in November 1975 when freedom fighters were being picked up at random and executed. From a makeshift cell where he was confined in Rampura TV station, Kazi broke open and swam across the marshy swathe, to be received by another set of executors waiting on the other side; but his sports credentials came to his rescue as he was recognised as Kazi Bhai, the basketball coach and got him off just in time before bullets were fired. Instead of heading home, Kazi left for Germany and returned after a long sojourn. His heart was in Bangladesh.

Over years, I became Tawfiq Bhai to him.

Kazi had joined the 2nd War Course as an army cadet but left the service with a few others on his return to the liberated Bangladesh. Since then, unlike others, his life never took roots. As if after a job well done, he was on permanent leave. He floated on the fringes of life, a near bohemian existence with not much to look for. He had an infectious gusto, a refreshing encounter with life that was a fleeting experience. He enjoyed every bit of it. I was never surprised to see Kazi knocking at my residence at Gulshan morning, afternoon or at the wee hours of night. He was always alive and kicking. Kazi Bhai to my wife, and chacha to my two daughters, was from another world. His engagement with life was confined to his wife, son Siyam and daughter Mashfia. He loved them in his unique way and once in a while, regretted not having



KAZI Kamaluddin Ahmed

done much for them. Kazi was always keen about my welfare.

In 2008 when the intelligence guys were intimidating me to give false testimony against Sheikh Hasina, Kazi dropped by at my place. He told me that he had been to the headquarters of DGFI looking for those responsible for persecuting me. He wanted to have few words I knew what it all meant. Kazi believed in summary actionman to man. I was relieved that he had not had the encounter he was looking for. I told him to back off imagining a 60+ year old landing a few punches on a serving general.

Kazi was perennially short of cash but not on generosity. When he was fighting for life after surgery a few months ago, my youngest daughter Mridula got married. Kazi left an envelope with \$200 inside. I called to rebuke him, given he was broke with his medical expenses, only to be rebuffed. He said that he had saved some from his treatment and it was the least he could give his blessing on such an occasion!

Before finally checking into the hospital, Kazi dropped in at my office. He knew his days were numbered but still held a detached, yet a generous view, of life. With a wry face he left. He was at the end of a tumultuous journey during which he gave so much away and got so little.

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