

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SUNDAY APRIL 20, 2014

Doctors cannot make patients suffer

Taking law into one's hand reprehensible

WHEN doctors at Birdem General Hospital went on a strike last week to protest an assault on their colleagues by outsiders over the death of a patient, the question of medical professionalism and ethics was raised anew. That question is simple: to what extent are doctors justified in going off work, depriving hundreds of patients of treatment, simply because they are angry at the behaviour of some unruly people?

We are in full agreement with those rights activists and physicians who have made it clear that staying away from their professional responsibilities as a means of protest is fundamentally an instance of great irresponsibility on the part of doctors. Indeed, every professional in this country as also elsewhere operates on a code of ethics. Unfortunately, all too often, doctors in Bangladesh have resorted to such strikes without embarrassment or remorse of any kind. That is clearly not acceptable. There are legal means and official procedures through which they can register their grievances, just like the aggrieved patients or their relatives can.

It is also the responsibility of the authorities to come down hard on those elements which, when a death occurs in a hospital, swiftly resort to taking law into their own hands.

As for our doctors, must they so easily forget their Hippocratic oath?

The matter should be probed with the purpose of devising ways and means to avert any recurrence and improving doctor-patient relationship.

Meeting deadline increasingly unlikely

Financing conversion key

WITH June 2014 closing in fast as the deadline set by the government for all polluting brick kilns to convert to more environmentally friendly standards, we find that a mere 30 per cent of existing fields have complied. Now that there is precious little time left, we are most certainly going to see yet another extension given to the industry. However, will a time extension solve the problems associated with traditional Fixed Chimney Kilns that contribute some 40 per cent of the air pollution around Dhaka?

Serious differences of opinion exist between owners and the regulator. Although the conversion to cleaner energy is being helped by UNDP's "Green Brick Project", the fact that the rate of conversion is falling short is hardly surprising since there are some 8,000 fields in operation. Indeed, the Brick Making and Kiln Establishment (Control) Act 2013 is said to be vague on what constitutes "energy efficient non-polluting technology". With such loopholes, many field owners have expended considerable finance to convert to greener technology that was later found to be faulty in design.

One cannot overlook the fact that a typical brick field's conversion to newer, more environmentally-friendly technology entails a cost of anywhere between Tk. 6-7 million. Hence, the government must make a commitment that the law will not be changed somewhere down the line to requiring brick field owners to undertake another new round of conversion. This coupled with making available access to finance for the industry will have far better results than issuing threats of closing down kilns.

Mind your words, please!

ABDUL MATIN

ANYONE who has seen the British comedy series '*Mind Your Language*' knows how funny the English language can get on some occasions. The problem is that it does not always follow logic. The English people will argue that this is the beauty of their language. See, in how many ways the letter 's' is pronounced in the following words: sweet, sugar, cousin, pleasure and island? Obviously, it is different in each word while it is silent in the last word. Next, in how many ways can the word 'bow' be used? It can be a long wooden stick with horse hair that is used to play a musical instrument, such as violin. We bow to show respect to others. The front part of a ship is known as a bow. We tie a ribbon around our necks to form a bow (bowtie). It can also be a weapon to shoot an arrow with.

There are also words with similar pronunciations but different meanings. Note the following sentence: You can always pluck a 'pair' of 'pears' from a tree that 'bears' the fruit and but take care when you 'bare' your personal secrets.

We even get confused with words having different pronunciations. Sir Winston Churchill, former British prime minister, was very meticulous in selecting words for his speeches and writings. In a cabinet meeting, he once cautioned his colleagues to be more careful in choosing words while speaking in the parliament. He then narrated an interesting story to emphasize his point.

A young man went to a surgeon and requested him to perform a surgery on him. "What kind of surgery do you want?", the surgeon asked.

"I want to have castration." The young man replied.

The surgeon was surprised and said: "You are too young to undergo such an operation. I suggest you seriously think over it again."

The young man was adamant and insisted on having the surgery. Reluctantly, the surgeon performed the operation. Suffering from pain, he found another patient with pain in an adjacent bed next morning. Out of curiosity, he asked the other patient, "What is the problem with you?"

"I had a surgery," the other patient replied.

"What kind of surgery?" he asked.

"I had circumcision," the other patient replied calmly.

"Did you say circumcision? Oh! That's the word I was looking for yesterday!" The young man screamed in agony. He finally got the right word but it was too late!

So, take care in choosing your words, please!

The writer is a former chief engineer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission.

India and China: Are they mismatched?

SUNDAY
POUCH



ASHFAQUR
RAHMAN

HAVE you ever wondered how two of the world's ancient civilisations, India and China shared advanced ideas in the past? They looked at each other, learned and adopted what was suitable to their genius. Yet in colonial times their relations suffered. This was because of political and boundary disputes. To westerners they are mismatched nations. But the rest of the world hopes that if these two behemoths cooperate the world can only benefit.

Let us look at history. Some 2000 years back China built the 4,000 mile Great Wall of China. About three centuries before Christ, Emperor Qin built the terracotta army which is still a marvel. It was China that gave the world what is a bureaucracy. Without this, the modern world would be rudderless. Besides, China invented the simplest things like umbrellas, to sailing boats to paper money, dams, the compass and many other useful items of daily use.

What did India do? Among others, India invented the zero, without which mathematics and all calculations would be non-existent. Computers would still be in the future as no programming could be invented. India developed much of mathematics, medicine, textiles, chemistry, sewerage systems, etc. One of the greatest contributions of India and a gift to China and the world was Buddhism. The return osmosis was the idea of the great Chinese philosopher Confucius whose idea of humility and right conduct by merciful rulers influenced Emperor Ashok in the 3rd century B.C.

But then, between the 16th and the 17th centuries, contacts were almost lost between these two great civilisations. What really happened? It was the western colonial masters who with their new ideas, technology and way of life discouraged any contacts between the two. These great civilisations did not dip into each others' treasures to learn, to benefit and to grow together. They were clearly on the path to conflict and hostility. All because of a slice of territorial claim in the Himalaya region as well as on the issue of Tibet in China.

So who benefits from this conflict? The world, however, is increasingly becoming globalised. The west has taken full advantage of the benefits that accompany globalisation. These are systematic inter-dependence, integration, mobilisation and a careful redistribution of global resources. Thus we see the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) and the evolution of the European Union (EU) grow into mighty engines of growth. In matters of defense and security we have the formation of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Nato) which is busy consolidating western interests around the world. So why not the same cooperation between the two Asian giants -- India and China?

Let us see in which sectors these two regions can cooperate. One that comes immediately to mind is the global redistribution of qualified manpower. Today, there are increasingly no national economies. The international competition for Research and Development (R&D) resources are global. India and China are producing hundreds and thousands of engineers, doctors and scientists each year. They are taking up jobs in the United States and Europe. Yet if these scientists and the R&D people remained in their own countries they would enrich their knowledge base further. The west would soon be unable to compete and would also be priced out of the market. More and more English speaking R&D scientists are graduating in the world who are of Indian or Chinese origin.

India and China cherish their own cultures and traditions. India for example value individual freedom and self-reliance. These are sterling qualities. Yet when it comes to utilising foreign and domestic investment it is China that shows the way. The moot question is, which of them is best poised to utilise foreign and domestic investment, China with its command economy or India with its boisterous democracy? The answer is China has done much better here. India can learn from China as to how it can overcome mismanagement of investment. Millions of poor Indians can therefore be quickly brought out of poverty. It will be some time before either India or China becomes an advanced industrial society. They therefore need to share each others' experience closely.

The next area of cooperation between India and China can be energy. Both the countries have a voracious appetite for oil. China is soaking up oil from African countries, even from violence ridden Sudan. So is India from other African countries. Both are looking at almost the same set of countries in the world for their carbon needs. But this is harmful to both. Soon, the Middle eastern countries and Russia, who are the suppliers of this source of energy, may price them out of the market. India and China need to look at their common resource base, the Himalayas, where they can utilise the hydro-electric sources of energy for their needs. Water, is another major resource which both need for their survival and growth. The existing sources of water from the ground and run-off are not always enough or not well conserved. They can start to jointly conserve and also scientifically tap into the glaciers which they both share geographically.

In the ultimate analysis, India and China must quickly resolve their territorial claims in the Himalayas so that they can cooperate in science, technology, resources and trade. This will not only benefit them but also their neighbours in a big way. Bangladesh would definitely benefit from its windfall. It would help bring economic parity and equilibrium among countries in this region over time. It is well known that the west is not going to be long in the driving seat in terms of economic development. It is India and China, with a few of their neighbours, who will be the new champions of growth. Are the new leaders of India and China listening?

The writer is a former Ambassador and a commentator on current affairs.
E-mail: ashfaq303@gmail.com

Politics of hallucination is losing out

BYLINE



M.J. AKBAR

EVERY so often small facts light up a large truth. One such nugget appeared in last Monday's *Indian Express*. This newspaper tracks, within many layers of election coverage, where any principal campaigner has been the previous day. And so there was a record of Narendra Modi chopper-hopping through Karnataka, reviving BJP in a state where the party has seen highs and lows through a few turbulent years; L.K. Advani was in Gujarat; Arvind Kejriwal was raising a bit of dust on road-shows in Punjab; and so on and so forth.

Where was Rahul Gandhi? The paper had a simple, even bland, statement: "No public engagements". It was an answer, but not an explanation. The likeliest reason, judging by personal history, was that Rahul Gandhi was taking a day off because it was a Sunday.

There is more than one reason why Rahul Gandhi seems to have faded from public discourse during a dramatic campaign season; but one cannot avoid the nagging suspicion that the Congress star is averse to any excessive workload. Nor does he have much to say beyond inanities sprinkled through his script by pen-pushers.

In the meanwhile, India has been whirling away on a rapidly shifting axis. The most startling statistic of this general election was revealed by the most recent opinion polls conducted by India Today. In Bihar, Narendra Modi is on course to get an astonishing 23% of the Muslim vote. This signals the collapse of a central theme of Congress rhetoric: cloud the Indian Muslim mind with dread at the prospect of a Modi-led NDA coming to power in Delhi. Fear and fog are the last weapons in the arsenal of a fast-dissolving Congress and its formal or informal allies like Lalu Prasad and Nitish Kumar.

It is always dangerous to make predictions. But statistical and anecdotal evidence suggests that the most surprising results will come from Bihar and Maharashtra, which send 88 MPs to the Lok Sabha. There is substantial migration of Yadavs and Muslims, once the core of Lalu's base, towards the NDA, reflecting an evolution beyond the traditional fissures of caste-and-creed politics. India Today's poll confirms this: Muslim support for Lalu and Congress has dropped from 52% to 40% and doubled for BJP and its allies, from 12% to 23%. Among Yadavs, the slide has been from 40% to 29% while BJP goes up from 22% to 47%. Why?

This election is about development and welfare. The politics of hallucination, a staple of north Indian elections, has lost out. Whenever Indians have voted for their stomach, they have delivered a strong government; when emotions have predominated, there has been a fractured Parliament. We are hearing the echo of 1971, when Mrs Indira Gandhi demolished a bevy of foes with a clear message: "They want to remove Indira Gandhi. I want to remove poverty." She personalised the promise, to decisive effect. It is not an accident that Narendra Modi evokes her memory. He told an audience in Karnataka, "You once voted Indira Gandhi to power. The youth of today may not know this because people like her do not exist in the

Congress anymore... I will do ten times what she did if you vote for me to be PM."

One of the prevailing clichés about elections is that no one reads a party manifesto. Perhaps the elitist commentariat is too busy to do so; but voters absorb a broad sense of what parties intend to deliver. The BJP manifesto gives precedence to jobs, education and investment in earning skills for minorities. It demands special attention for the girl child. It promises to protect the heritage of minorities and promote Urdu. It seeks to end the loot of waqf endowments that has been going on under the patronage of the present ruling establishment. It recognises the demand for a Ram temple at Ayodhya but categorises it as a cultural rather than an election issue. These are substantive commitments.

Every election has a sub-plot; parties which smell victory need to consolidate their base support, of course, but also set in motion a process by which there is slow accretion of votes from the basket of elsewhere. We can see both happening.



Mrs Indira Gandhi led Congress to a quantum leap forward in 1971 because she leavened the pent-up frustration with hope. Hope is antidote for anarchy. We saw anarchy rise and peak through the 1960s, not only in the spread of the Naxalite movement but also in numerous sectarian conflicts that ravaged India's social fabric. 2014 cannot be a mirror of the 1960s, for we have moved far beyond that bankrupt decade, but raw anger still has the potential to do huge damage. There is only one way to restore calm among the young: jobs. They have been left idle by a thoughtless government for ten long years. There will be a new government in a few weeks. Its immediate priority is a no-brainer: a revived economy, jobs and a massive investment in a better life for the poor.

The writer is Editor of *The Sunday Guardian*, published from Delhi, India on Sunday, published from London and Editorial Director, *India Today* and *Headlines Today*.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Wi-fi on public buses

I would like to thank the communications ministry for introducing 10 new BRTC buses with wi-fi connections. This is a major step in revolutionising communications and it might be another step towards 'digital Bangladesh'. For a large section of Dhaka residents who might not be able to afford internet connections, this might be a welcome opportunity to explore new horizons. It would also relieve some of the boredom associated with travelling by bus and getting stuck for hours in traffic jams. Most importantly, it would motivate people to travel by public transports, and as a result the number of cars on the streets might decrease.

However, I would hope that Teletalk routers that are being used can provide a good service to the passengers and have a decent amount of speed for browsing. At the same time, we the passengers should be more responsible in using the internet.

Tauhidul Islam
Uttara, Dhaka

Potato export: A blessing for farmers

Although potato is grown in a large scale in Bangladesh, every year due to lack of cold storage facilities a huge amount of potatoes rot and farmers either have to sell their product at very low prices (2 taka per kg!) or throw them away. Hopefully, this situation will change for the better as Russia is going to import potato from our country. We hope this will help potato growers get a fair price.

Ahmed Imtiaz
Banani, Dhaka

Take action to stop question paper leakage

It seems there is a competition in the country of leaking question papers before the public examinations such as PSC, JSC, SSC, HSC as well as bank exams, BCS exams, university admission tests, etc. The situation has come to a point when we can't imagine any exam without question paper leakage. Recently, the English 2nd paper question of HSC exam has been leaked resulting in the postponement of the exam. We are so frustrated with this situation. The culprits involved in this scam should be caught immediately and awarded severe punishment.

Shihab Ahmad Shah
Student of BBA
Shahjalal University of Science & Technology

Comments on news report, "Teesta woes for farmers," published on April 14, 2014

Shahin Huq

Truth is always the primary victim of hypocrisy. Despite all the Indian injustices on our land, we still have intellectuals in Dhaka, who claim to be patriots but won't speak up against Indian actions!

Snr Citizen

That a big resourceful country bordering Bangladesh will do this to a smaller one is unthinkable and defies logic. What do our intellectuals say about the picture of Teesta today? The tears of 160 million will not be enough to fill!

SM

No comments from AL Patriots!

Rabiul Islam

Saddening event for an independent country.

"Tarique & two collaborators" (April 14, 2014)

A freedom fighter

We are asking some people to read who even do not know how to read. The education of Tarique has not given him the knowledge to know what Presidential Proclamation order is. His party men are just sycophants.

Shahin Huq

Can we please stop this unnecessary debate and focus on restoring democracy and law and order situation in our country? Please think of the poor people and students from humble family background! What are we giving them other than frustration? Think of the border killings and the artificial desertification of our rivers! This unhealthy debate will only distract our attention.

Akhtar Shah

This debate just bore people stiff! Don't take ordinary folk as idiots; they know what's what and who's who! 43 years is long enough, can we please move on?

"Gonojagoron Mancha feud reaches peak" (April 13, 2014)

SM

'Ekattorer chetona' cannot be safeguarded by having party and candle light vigils... you need to sacrifice like our freedom fighters who spent days under open sky with no food, no sleep fighting the enemy.