

# The Daily Star

FOUNDER/EDITOR  
LATE S. M. ALI

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## Hospitals without doctors

### Can things get any worse?

THE running of hospitals without doctors is worryingly becoming a new trend. The latest to join the growing list is the Pirojpur Mother and Child Welfare Centre (MCWC) which, since December last year, has been running without a single doctor. Because of this, a Family Planning Officer in Bhandaria is performing the duty of medical officer as additional duty at MCWC, coming into the centre once or twice a month, travelling a great distance.

Not only is this unacceptable, but is also very inefficient. Having so much work piled on someone cannot produce good results and its ultimate sufferers will unfortunately be the patients. Patients are already being treated by nurses instead of doctors at MCWC and have to alternatively go to expensive private clinics for Caesarean or normal deliveries. Previously, when a doctor was available, over two hundred patients would visit the hospital every day; now, the number is half that.

Only on February 3, this newspaper reported on a similar crisis at the 250-bed Kurigram Sadar Hospital. There too, consultants have to carry out duties not normally given to them because of the shortage of physicians. The same is the case in many more hospitals. But what is perhaps most concerning is that the higher authorities, allegedly, do nothing when they are informed about doctor shortages by the hospital authorities.

This, however, has to change. The healthcare sector is clearly inadequately funded and is dying for government assistance. Thus, the sooner the authorities formulate a comprehensive plan of assistance and implement it, the better.

## Community mediation

### An alternative route to justice

COMMUNITY-BASED mediation can make justice more accessible to rural people as it can solve local problems locally saving both time and money, legal experts said at a conference in the capital recently. We believe they have a good point to make given that the road to justice is often too long as burgeoning court queues, rising costs of litigation and time delays continue to plague litigants.

The main advantage of this form of dispute settlement, which falls under the domain of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), is that it allows parties involved to control the process and the solution. Many countries of the world have adopted ADR mechanisms and achieved significant success in reducing backlog of cases and increasing access to justice for the poor. Mediators are trained individuals who bring opposite parties together and attempt to work out a settlement or agreement that both parties accept or reject. Proper training is crucial to ensure that there is no abuse of power. The scope of mediation is wide-it can be used for cases ranging from juvenile felonies to land disputes. Mediation in some countries has become a significant method for resolving disputes between investors and stock brokers.

Our courts are overburdened with cases and there is a serious shortage of judges. More than three million cases remained un-adjudicated until the end of last year and the number is like to hit around 5 million by 2020. Not only mediation but other forms of ADR which include early neutral evaluation, negotiation, conciliation and arbitration can be equally effective to settle cases outside of the courtroom. The government needs to build capacity in ADR at the grass roots level. NGOs can play an important role by building awareness.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

### Traffic jams in Shahbagh

Many people use the Shahbagh intersection every day, which is always clustered with traffic. Insufficient traffic police and improper time management of the traffic signals are the key reasons behind this problem. Neither the traffic police nor commuters seem to be following the digital traffic signals installed in the area.

I believe that the traffic department should be separated from the police department and be made into an individual organisation. More buses should be imported. People should be encouraged to travel with bicycles if their health allows. Online database of vehicles should be introduced immediately so that the traffic police can verify the validity of vehicles' documents instantly through electronic devices.

I request the government, Home Ministry, traffic department and both mayors of Dhaka City to consider the above suggestions to ease the traffic congestion in our city.

Md. Arifur Rahman  
Anwar Group of Industries

### Books should be presented as awards

Book reading culture is gradually shrinking among our societies. I believe that, instead of presenting just crests, gifts and other prizes in contests and special occasions, participants should receive books.

If thought provoking books relating to literature, history, philosophy, politics etc. can be offered, and established as a trend in our culture, people's minds will be broadened through the power of imagination, and a culture of tolerance and mutual respect can be developed.

Shuva Das, BSMRSTU

# The changing world order

FROM A BYSTANDER



MAHMOOD HASAN

THE year 2016 was a defining period for America with Donald Trump entering the White House. With the rise of populist parties all over Europe, 2017 will probably be the same for the old continent.

Emboldened by the Brexit referendum in June 2016, Eurosceptics and radical neo-Nazi parties have reemerged in Europe with enthusiasm. Donald Trump's victory in the US elections in November 2016 also provided a strong tailwind to these ultra-nationalists in Europe. These populist parties are firmly Eurosceptic, anti-establishment, anti-Muslim, xenophobic, anti-globalisation, and believe in isolationist nationalism.

Voters in Europe are exasperated because the traditional parties have failed to address unemployment and austerity, and have allowed a record number of Muslim refugees to enter their communities. After the terrorist attacks in France, Belgium and Germany in 2016, voters are totally disillusioned with the conventional parties.

As three important elections are due in 2017, four far right parties of Europe got together in Koblenz, Germany on January 21, 2017 for a "counter-summit" to discuss their "visions for Europe of Freedom" and dismantling the European Union. The four leaders were - Marine Le Pen of Front Nationale (FN) of France; Frauke Petry of the anti-immigration movement, Alternative for Germany (AfD), in Germany; Geert Wilders, the virulent anti-Muslim Dutch leader of the far right Freedom Party (PVV); and Matteo Salvini of Italy's Northern League, who wants to quit the Euro zone. All are members of the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) group in the European Parliament. The common denominator for these neo-

Nazi leaders is anti-Muslim-immigrant sentiments of voters.

The Netherlands goes for general elections on March 15, 2017 to elect 150 members of the House of Representatives. If the opinion polls are right, Geert Wilders has a fair chance of elbowing out pro-Europe Prime Minister Mark Rutte's People's Party. Wilders' victory would mean Dutch polity going back on liberalism, closing the door to Muslim immigrants and walking out of the EU. At the conference, Wilder highlighting the dangers posed by Muslim immigrants said, "... all the established parties are promoting our Islamisation ... people have become strangers in their own land..."

Germany also goes for federal parliamentary (Bundestag) elections on September 24, 2017. Angela Merkel will run for the fourth term as chancellor. She will be challenged by AfD, which made good gains in recent local elections. Merkel has come under severe criticism for her open door policy to immigrants from the Middle East. If Frauke Petry's AfD wins, she would certainly reverse Merkel's pro-Europe policies. Addressing her colleagues Frauke remarked, "Together with the parties represented here, we want a subsidiary Europe of free Fatherlands".

There is a great deal of similarity in the statements of these European leaders to what Donald Trump has been saying

openness may succumb to a chauvinistic version of nationalism based on crude self-interest, which is similar to Trump's narrow nationalism based on ethnicity.

When a nation discards liberalism, it goes down the slippery slope of ultra-nationalism and militarisation of politics. The rise of nationalist parties will no doubt break the EU and pose a threat to the world. A belligerent Trump thinks that a disintegrated Europe is a good development, while European leaders say that Trump is the third threat after radical Islam and Vladimir Putin. Didn't the upsurge of Westphalian sovereignty in 1930s eventually lead to the Second World War? Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev did warn that the world is preparing for war.

After Donald Trump's Muslim ban and the rise of ultra-right parties in Europe playing on anti-Muslim sentiments, it appears that the clash of civilisations has after all come to a head. But isn't this refugee migration the creation of the West? Hasn't the West-imposed wars on the Middle East and North Africa that have totally destroyed the socio-religious fabric of Muslim civilisation in these parts of the world? The result - millions are now at the doors of the West as refugees.

The Western world, as we know it, is on the threshold of a catalytic upheaval. It actually stands on two geopolitical pillars - America and Europe - both having liberal democracies as political and capitalistic systems of economies. The American pillar is already on shaky grounds as Donald Trump has set out to fundamentally change the country's liberal political underpinnings with his raw isolationist nationalism. And if these neo-Nazi parties win the elections in Europe, the other pillar will also crumble.

Will political changes in Europe be the beginning of the end of the existing world order that was established following WWII? Is it the turn of Europe to usher in a new world order?

The writer is a former ambassador and secretary.

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France goes for presidential elections on April 23, 2017. The French elections will be extremely important for the future of the European Union. Ultra-nationalist Marine Le-Pen, openly supported and funded by Russia, is vehemently anti-Brussels. Her chances to be president appear bright as Republican candidate Francois Fillon is embroiled in a financial scam. Le Pen wants Europeans to "wake-up" and has said, "The Brussels wall will have to come down just like the Berlin wall came down ... The EU, this oppressive model ... should not last more than two minutes". She also called for cooperation with Russia and wants Europe to withdraw from NATO.

in America. Essentially the foothold of popularity of ultra-nationalist parties is based on voters' ignorance, fear and anger. Ignorance about socio-political realities drives voters to be sceptic. The fear is that Muslim migrants would destroy the Christian identity of European societies. The anger stems from economic mismanagement by the traditional parties.

Nationalism, born in Europe, is returning to the continent with vengeance. The elections will essentially be referendums on European liberalism. Victory of the extreme right parties in the elections would mean a tectonic shift in European politics. European values of multiculturalism, progressiveness and

# Countries should prepare to tackle the new Trump administration



KIM JI-HYUN

IT'S official. A new world order, aka, the Trump Order, has been set in motion.

Most of us should have been ready for it, since the man had been more than clear about

backtracking on America's global trade policies. And now, in one flamboyant gesture, he has overturned his predecessor Barack Obama's decision to join the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP).

As one of the key members, Japan is up in arms. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

now, and internal government sources say the foundations have already been laid. Prime Minister Abe has already put in motion the necessary structural reforms to wean Japan off of the US or make Japanese firms more competitive in the face of high tariffs. Abe is also preparing to enlist the support of high-profile companies such as Softbank, which has been pledging more investment in America.

Further, Japan is looking to cut loose from China, which has made it clear it won't play into US hands.

In contrast to Japan and China, South Korea has a smaller say. But that does not mean it has less on the line.

The country stands as the world's 11th-largest economy in terms of GDP, but it

brainstorming a strategy to keep the deal on track, and must readily communicate its plans with the public before the concerns mushroom into something bigger.

The alliance with the US goes far beyond military issues, and the significance should not be downplayed or tainted in any way if Korea is to continue pursuing its national interests.

The strategy should be laid out in such a way to prevent Koreans from harbouring unnecessary ill sentiment toward the US, and vice versa. For this, both governments will have to cooperate seamlessly. Trump must realise the contribution that Koreans and the Korean economy are making in the US. That while it may not be comparable in size to



not pull the plug on these efforts for the sake of global partnership. And needless to say, the products and services brought into the US also help create livelihoods there, and give Americans what they need.

All of this should not be forgotten or put on a back burner. As already witnessed in the Lehman Brothers meltdown, the intricate web of global trade and finance ensures that the demise of a single company can affect so many more.

But, in a weird and twisted way, I do envy the American people. Sure, there could have been someone better than Trump, who psychologists have branded as narcissistic and delusional.

But for many Americans, Trump is doing what they have only dreamed of doing and saying. To say out loud, that they think America is the best, that they are scared of anyone appearing to infringe upon its beliefs and interests, even at the expense of other nations and peoples. To say that the US won't play the peace-brokering leader who is constantly mindful of others, including rivals. To say, the US will start acting only for its benefit-regardless of how short-sighted this may be.

To have a president, as strange as he may be, who for now, appears so committed in his campaign, does draw an odd contrast with our embattled President Park Geun-hye who now seems anxious only to cover her own tail. In some ways, they are similar in that they seem to prioritise themselves. But at least for now, Trump is giving many Americans the promise they need, as twisted or unorthodox his methods may be.

In a similar fashion, but based on a strategic and acceptable approach, Korea should be ready to protect its interests and its people amid the fast-changing global order. And all other players in the economy must be ready to lend a helping hand.

The writer is the Tokyo correspondent of The Korea Herald.



has vowed he would continue to try and persuade President Donald Trump.

At the same time, Tokyo appears to be quite ready to face the new threat.

Japan is a country that downplays the number of naval destroyers it has in order to keep its frenemies in check, and to assure them it still has a long way to go in terms of military defence. In reality, Tokyo is armed with seemingly worn-down subs that can actually be made battle-ready at a moment's notice.

The Abe administration has been ready to face off with Trump for a while

also depends on exports for more than two-thirds of it. So any policy decisions by its chief trade partners are bound to have a profound impact - even more so now that its internal economic affairs are in a mess due to the ongoing impeachment. South Korea truly cannot afford to have its global partnerships jeopardised.

During his presidential campaign, Trump has already called the US-Korea FTA a failed partnership that has robbed the US of 100,000 jobs. The Seoul government should have long been

other nations such as Japan and China, there is no going around the fact that in the end, clichéd as it may sound, it is indeed a global economy.

Korean firms should take a cue from Softbank and find ways they can offer more support for the Korean economy as it faces the aftershocks of Trump's latest policy move. As for the US, it must remember that Korean companies like Hyundai, Samsung and LG have been seeking cheaper entry into the US for years via countries like Mexico and Vietnam. The change of a regime must

This is a series of columns on global affairs written by top editors and senior writers from members of the Asia News Network and published in newspapers across the region.