

Course correction – Zia, cornered: on BNP facing setback in Bangladesh

The BNP suffers yet another setback as Bangladesh's elections approach

Former Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's conviction in yet another case of corruption imperils her Bangladesh Nationalist Party's already meagre prospects in the coming parliamentary elections. She has been sentenced to seven years of rigorous imprisonment. With her son and acting chairman of the BNP, Tarique Rahman, in exile, and convicted in absentia and sentenced to life imprisonment for his alleged role in a grenade attack on an Awami League rally, the party's leadership has been effectively crippled. It is no wonder that the BNP has formed an alliance, the Jatiya Oikya Front, with other minor parties, under the leadership of secular icon and civil society leader Kamal Hossain to bolster its fortunes in what looks like a lopsided battle against the entrenched Awami League. The Awami League and the BNP have rarely engaged each other as healthy political rivals. There has been no love lost between the leaders of the two parties, Ms. Zia and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina: they have tended to view each other with a sense of vengeance. Yet it would be misleading to claim that the punitive actions ordered against the BNP's leaders by the judiciary are entirely due to any pressure from the ruling party. The BNP's last term in government, from 2001 to 2006, was marked by corruption, support for fundamentalism and repressive measures against the Opposition.

The BNP is now caught in a bind. It had boycotted the parliamentary election in 2014 to give the process a veneer of illegitimacy, leaving the Awami League as the only major political force in contention. But the BNP's decision backfired. Bangladesh under Awami rule has recorded steady economic growth and has had creditable successes in welfare delivery and public health measures, seen tangibly in the lowered infant mortality and fertility rates and in sanitation. There have been some misgivings too, as Prime Minister Hasina has increasingly tended to be authoritarian and impatient with critics. While the judiciary has found the BNP's leadership to be guilty of corruption and misdemeanours, the crackdown on the BNP rank and file, with thousands of activists targeted by the police, is a sign of the government's overreach. A new digital security law, most ominously, has been passed with stringent punishment to anyone secretly recording state officials and spreading "negative propaganda" about the Liberation War, among other things. This manoeuvre is clearly intended to have a chilling effect on the Bangladeshi media. A healthy democracy must allow for differences of opinion. The government must not pursue this quasi-authoritarian bent at a time when its leading opposition has been emasculated. This would only help delegitimise the formal aspects of democracy, such as elections, among the government's critics and the electorate.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Setback** - a problem that delays or that stops progress or makes a situation worse
- **Former** - used for describing someone or something that had a particular job, title, status etc in the past, but not now
- **Conviction** - a decision by a court of law that someone is guilty of a crime
- **Imperil** - to put someone or something in danger
- **Meagre** - smaller or less than you want or need
- **Prospect** - the possibility that something will happen, especially something good

- **Sentence** - when a judge sentences someone, they officially state what someone's punishment will be
- **Rigorous** - strict, or severe
- **Imprisonment** - the punishment of being put into prison
- **Acting** - someone who does a job for a short time while the person who usually does that job is not there
- **Exile** - a situation in which you are forced to live in a foreign country because you cannot live in your own country, usually for political reasons
- **Convicted** - proved to be guilty of a crime by a court of law
- **In absentia** - if something happens in absentia, the person involved is not present when it happens
- **Alleged** - claimed to be true, even though this has not been proved
- **Grenade** - a small bomb that someone throws or fires from a gun
- **Rally** - a public meeting that a lot of people go to in order to support someone or something or to protest against someone or something
- **Cripple** - to damage something severely, or to prevent it from working properly
- **Alliance** - an arrangement between two or more people, groups, or countries by which they agree to work together to achieve something
- **Minor** - not very important in comparison with people or things of the same type
- **Secular** - not religious, or not connected with religion
- **Icon** - someone who is very famous and who people think represents a particular idea
- **Bolster** - to make something stronger or more effective
- **Fortunes** - the things that happen to someone or something and the changing degree to which they are successful
- **Lopsided** - not equal
- **Entrenched** - entrenched attitudes or feelings have existed for a long time and are difficult to change
- **League** - a group of people or things that are similar in their quality, skills, or achievements
- **Rival** - a person, team, or business that competes with another
- **Vengeance** - the act of harming or killing someone because they have done something bad to you
- **Misleading** - intended or likely to make someone believe something that is incorrect or not true
- **Punitive** - relating to or causing punishment or great difficulty
- **Judiciary** - the part of government that consists of all the judges and courts in a country
- **Fundamentalism** - the belief that the original laws of a religion should be followed very strictly and not be changed
- **Repressive** - ruling or controlling people by the use of force or violence, or by laws that put unreasonable limits on their freedom
- **Boycott** - to not take part in an event, or to not buy or use something as a protest
- **Veneer** - a pleasant appearance, or a polite way of behaving that is not sincere
- **Illegitimacy** - not legal or fair
- **Contention** - an opinion or statement that something is true, especially one made during a discussion or argument
- **Backfire** - if a plan or idea backfires, it has the opposite effect to the one that you wanted

- **Creditable** - good enough to deserve some praise or admiration
- **Tangible** - important and noticeable
- **Infant** - a baby, or a very young child
- **Mortality** - the number of deaths within a particular area, group etc
- **Fertility** - a woman's ability to have babies
- **Sanitation** - conditions and processes relating to people's health, especially the systems that supply water and deal with human waste
- **Misgiving** - a feeling of fear or doubt about whether something is right or will have a good result
- **Authoritarian** - controlling everything and forcing people to obey strict rules and laws
- **Impatient** - annoyed because something is not happening as quickly as you want or in the way you want
- **Critic** - someone who does not like something and states their opinion about it
- **Guilty** - someone who is guilty has committed a crime
- **Misdemeanour** - an action that is bad or wrong, but not in a serious way
- **Crackdown** - strong action that someone in authority takes to stop a particular activity
- **Overreach** - to try to do more than your ability, authority, or money will allow
- **Ominous** - making you think that something bad will happen
- **Stringent** - stringent rules or conditions are strict and make you achieve high standards
- **Propaganda** - information, especially false information, that a government or organization spreads in order to influence people's opinions and beliefs
- **Liberate** - to make a place or the people in it free from soldiers who have been controlling it
- **Manoeuvre** - an action or movement that you need care or skill to do
- **Chilling** - making you feel suddenly very frightened or worried
- **Pursue** - to follow a course of activity
- **Quasi** - partly
- **Authoritarian** - controlling everything and forcing people to obey strict rules and laws
- **Emasculate** - to reduce the power or effectiveness of something
- **Delegitimise** - to make something seem not valid or not acceptable
- **Electorate** - all the people who are allowed to vote in an election

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 rse correction – **Averting polarisation: on SC pushing back Ayodhya verdict**

The Supreme Court has judiciously pushed back the timeline for a verdict on Ayodhya

By declining to fix until January 2019 a date for hearing the Ayodhya case, the Supreme Court has judiciously diminished the possibility of a final verdict before the next Lok Sabha election. The adjournment is both welcome and necessary, as it pushes back the prospect of any judgment in the run-up to the polls. It hardly needs reiteration that regardless of which way it goes, any verdict would polarise the nation. When a three-judge Bench refused to refer some questions of law in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute to a seven-member Bench last month, it raised the prospects of an early final hearing in the appeals filed against the Allahabad High Court's judgment of 2010 in the main title suit. The court had then set October 29, 2018, for the next hearing. This had raised the hopes of

aggressive proponents of Hindutva who have been expecting a favourable verdict for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya. While it is true that courts should not tailor their timelines to election dates, it is equally important that religious sentiments are not stoked and exploited during election season. The decision of a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi to put off even the exercise of fixing a date for the final hearing is quite pragmatic. In the eyes of the law, this may be just a title dispute. However, given the divisive effect the Ram temple movement has had on the country's politics and history, it would be unwise to equate this with any other judicial matter that can come up for disposal in due course.

A word of caution is in order. The postponement of the hearing does not preclude an aggressive campaign by those upset and impatient about what they see as a delay in achieving their objective of building a temple at the disputed site. Already there are voices clamouring, most imprudently, for an ordinance to enable the construction of a temple. These must be resisted, and the judiciary must be vigilant and resourceful in ensuring that the dispute remains within its jurisdiction. A solution, unless judicially driven, is unlikely to command constitutional legitimacy. Twenty four years ago the **Supreme Court** had resolutely refused to answer a controversial Presidential reference on whether a temple pre-existed the demolished masjid. It had restored the title suit and made it clear that the government is only a receiver of the land it had acquired in Ayodhya; and that it holds the land in trust, only to be handed over to the party that succeeds in the suit. This recourse to a judicial remedy should not be circumvented. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his Independence Day address in 2014, had called for a 10-year moratorium on communal and sectarian issues. As long as he sticks to the spirit behind this appeal, it will not be legitimate for anyone to demand a pre-emptive law in favour of a temple.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Avert** - to prevent something bad or harmful from happening
- **Polarisation** - the act of dividing something, especially something that contains different people or opinions, into two completely separate groups
- **Push back** - to delay something so that it happens later than planned
- **Verdict** - an official judgment made in a court
- **Judicious** - showing intelligence and good judgment
- **Timeline** - a plan of when something should happen or how much time something should take
- **Decline** - to refuse
- **Hearing** - a meeting of a court of law or official organization to find out the facts about something
- **Diminished** - reduced in amount, size, or importance
- **Adjournment** - a pause or rest during a formal meeting or trial, or the act of giving a pause or rest
- **Prospect** - the possibility that something will happen
- **Run-up** - to make something very quickly
- **Reiterate** - to repeat something in order to emphasize it or make it very clear to people
- **Regardless** - without being affected or influenced by someone or something
- **Polarise** - to form two very different groups, opinions, or situations that are completely opposite to each other, or to cause this to happen
- **Dispute** - a serious disagreement, especially one between groups of people that lasts for a long time
- **Aggressive** - someone who is aggressive is very determined to win or be successful
- **Proponent** - someone who publicly supports an idea, policy, plan etc

- **Favourable** - giving someone or something an advantage or a benefit
- **Tailor** - to make or prepare something following particular instructions
- **Stoke** - to make a feeling stronger
- **Exploit** - to use a situation so that you get benefit from it, even if it is wrong or unfair to do this
- **Put off** - to delay doing something, especially because you do not want to do it
- **Pragmatic** - involving or emphasizing practical results rather than theories and ideas
- **Divisive** - likely to cause arguments between people
- **Unwise** - stupid and likely to cause problems
- **Equate** - to consider something to be the same as something else
- **Caution** - careful thought and lack of hurry in order to try to avoid risks or danger
- **Postponement** - to decide that something will not be done at the time when it was planned for, but at a later time
- **Preclude** - if one thing precludes another, the first thing prevents the second one from happening
- **Campaign** - a series of actions intended to produce political or social change
- **Disputed** - a disputed area is one that different countries claim belongs to them, so that there is a disagreement or war between them
- **Clamour** - to say that you want something and must have it
- **Imprudent** - not sensible, especially in relation to the way that money is spent or invested
- **Vigilant** - always being careful to notice things, especially possible danger:
- **Resourceful** - good at finding effective ways to deal with problems
- **Ensure** - to make certain that something happens or is done
- **Legitimacy** - the fact that something is legal
- **Resolute** - extremely determined
- **Demolish** - to deliberately destroy a building
- **Acquire** - to get something
- **Remedy** - a solution to a particular problem
- **Circumvent** - to find a way of avoiding a rule or law that limits you, especially using a clever trick that does not break the law
- **Address** - a formal speech
- **Moratorium** - an official agreement to stop an activity temporarily
- **Sectarian** - caused by disagreements among people from different religious groups
- **Spirit** - a particular way of thinking, feeling, or behaving
- **Legitimate** - fair and reasonable
- **Pre-emptive** - done or said to prevent something from happening

Course correction – A populist haze — on Brazil polls

Brazil votes this week in an election charged by an anti-establishment campaign

The campaign for Sunday's elections in Brazil is beset by an anti-establishment mood, as in several democracies. Legislators at the state and national levels are being elected, but it is the contest for the President's post that has really polarised the campaign. The personalised nature of the contest owes to the lingering shadow of Operation Car Wash, a buzzword for the anti-corruption campaign that

underpins the confrontation between the legislature and the judiciary. At the centre of the investigations into the multi-billion dollar distribution of patronage to political and bureaucratic bigwigs is Petrobras, the state-owned oil firm. The anti-graft developments have removed established leaders from the fray, including Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the former President from the left-wing Workers' Party (PT) now serving a 12-year jail sentence. His bid to run for a third term was quashed by the electoral court, following the dismissal of an appeal against his 2017 conviction. Under the watch of Mr. Lula's successor, Dilma Rousseff, Brazil plunged into its worst recession in a century. She was impeached, but more on technical grounds linked to fiscal mismanagement than any egregious violations. The outgoing President, Michel Temer, also came under the prosecution's scanner but he survived, thanks to Congressional intervention to prevent any ripple effects. The overall atmosphere in the run-up to the elections has thus got more murky.

Surging in several opinion polls in the five-corner presidential contest for the first round is the far-right frontrunner, Jair Bolsonaro, an ex-army captain often compared with autocratic leaders elsewhere. A stabbing incident at an election rally has forced Mr. Bolsonaro to campaign from his hospital bed, a sign of the sharp and often violent polarisation between political extremes. The firebrand politician's homophobic and misogynistic views triggered protests over the weekend by thousands of women. Mr. Bolsonaro's main challenger is the PT's Fernando Haddad, a former mayor of São Paulo, whose nomination was deferred until the verdict on Mr. Lula's candidacy. Mr. Haddad's prospects may have improved had the PT reconciled itself to the overturning of Mr. Lula's appeal in January. The party's best hope now is that the economist will convert the former President's popularity into votes for himself. There is concern among investors that the election of a populist may impede long overdue reforms to break the dominance of sectional interests in Brazil's economic policies. Such intervention is seen as crucial to restore investor confidence, stimulate infrastructure growth and reverse Brazil's recession. The expectation is that Sunday's vote will result in a run-off. That, many hope, will set the stage for a more sober lead-up to the final vote.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **Populist** - representing the interests and opinions of ordinary people
- **Haze** - a situation or condition which makes it difficult for you to think clearly
- **Establishment** - the important and powerful people who control a country or an organization, especially those who support the existing situation
- **Campaign** - a series of actions intended to produce political or social change
- **Beset** - to cause someone difficulty or danger over a period of time
- **Legislator** - someone who has the power and authority to create new laws
- **Contest** - a competition, especially one in which people's skill in a particular activity or sport is tested
- **Polarise** - to form two very different groups, opinions, or situations that are completely opposite to each other, or to cause this to happen
- **Lingering** - lasting for a long time, especially when this is unpleasant or not necessary
- **Buzzword** - a word that has become very popular, especially a word relating to a particular activity or subject
- **Underpin** - to be an important basic part of something, allowing it to succeed or continue to exist
- **Confrontation** - a situation in which people or groups are arguing angrily or are fighting
- **Legislature** - the part of government that makes and changes laws
- **Judiciary** - the part of government that consists of all the judges and courts in a country
- **Patronage** - help or money that is given to a person or organization

- **Bureaucratic** - involving a lot of complicated rules, details, and processes
- **Bigwig** - an important and powerful person in an organization
- **State-owned** - owned by the government
- **Graft** - dishonest or illegal activities in politics or business that involve giving people money or advantages in exchange for their help or support
- **Fray** - a fight or argument, esp. one in which several people take part
- **Former** - used for describing someone or something that had a particular job, title, status etc in the past, but not now
- **Left-wing** - someone who is left-wing is considered to have socialist aims and ideas, for example that property, money, and power should be shared more equally
- **Sentence** - a punishment given by a judge, usually involving a period of time that a person must spend in prison
- **Term** - a period of time during which a politician or other official holds their job
- **Quash** - to stop something from continuing
- **Dismissal** - a refusal to accept that something might be true or important
- **Conviction** - a decision by a court of law that someone is guilty of a crime
- **Successor** - someone who has an important position after someone else
- **Plunge into** - to suddenly start doing something with energy and enthusiasm, but sometimes without thinking about it first
- **Recession** - a period when trade and industry are not successful and there is a lot of unemployment
- **Impeach** - to formally accuse a public official of a serious crime relating to their job
- **Fiscal** - relating to money and financial matters
- **Mismanagement** - the process of organizing or controlling something badly
- **Egregious** - extremely bad
- **Violation** - an action that is in opposition to a law, agreement, principle etc
- **Outgoing** - soon to leave a position of authority or power
- **Survive** - to manage to deal with something difficult or unpleasant
- **Thanks to** - used for saying that someone or something is responsible for something that happened
- **Intervention** - a situation in which someone becomes involved in a particular issue, problem etc in order to influence what happens
- **Ripple effect** - a situation in which one thing causes a series of other things to happen
- **Run-up** - to make something very quickly
- **Murky** - involving activities that are not clearly known and that people think are dishonest or morally wrong
- **Opinion poll** - an attempt to find out what people in general think about a subject by asking some people questions about it
- **Frontrunner** - the person or thing considered the most likely to win a competition, game, election etc
- **Autocratic** - ruling with complete power
- **Elsewhere** - in or to another place or other places
- **Stabbing** - an attack in which someone is stabbed
- **Stab** - to kill or hurt someone by pushing a knife or other sharp object into their body
- **Polarisation** - the act of dividing something, especially something that contains different people or opinions, into two completely separate groups

- **Extreme** - an opinion or way of behaving that is as different from another as it is possible to be
- **Firebrand** - someone who has strong feelings, especially about politics, and wants to change things or encourage other people to feel the same
- **Homophobic** - a fear or dislike of gay people
- **Misogynistic** - showing feelings of hating women or a belief that men are better than women
- **Trigger** - to make something happen
- **Protest** - a strong complaint or disagreement
- **Former** - used for describing someone or something that had a particular job, title, status etc in the past, but not now
- **Deferred** - delayed until a later time
- **Verdict** - an official judgment made in a court
- **Candidacy** - the fact that someone is a candidate in an election
- **Prospect** - the possibility that something will happen, especially something good
- **Reconcile** - to find a way to make ideas, beliefs, needs etc that are opposed to each other capable of existing together
- **Overturn** - to change a legal decision
- **Concern** - a feeling of worry about something, especially one that a lot of people have about an important issue
- **Populist** - representing the interests and opinions of ordinary people
- **Impede** - to make it more difficult for someone to do something or more difficult for something to happen
- **Overdue** - if something is overdue, it should have been done before now
- **Reform** - a change that is intended to correct a situation that is wrong or unfair, or make a system work more effectively
- **Dominance** - a situation in which one person or thing has more influence or power than any other
- **Stimulate** - to encourage something to happen, develop, or improve
- **Recession** - a period when trade and industry are not successful and there is a lot of unemployment
- **Run-off** - to force someone to leave a place
- **Set the stage for something** - to create the conditions in which something is likely to happen
- **Sober** - with a serious attitude
- **Lead-up** - the period that comes before an important event

☞ **If You Are Not Willing To Learn, No One Can Help You!**
If You Are Determined To Learn, No One Can Stop You! ☞