By the Way

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For the last week I have been trying to phone my family in Dhaka from Rome to discover that the external phone cables have been stolen from the apartment premises. Well, grin and bear it, I say.

Talking about phoning, I just called my son, newly posted in Dubai. His practical, Insead-trained head is reeling at the sheer waste of money among the 'captains of industry' in this crazily growing city's strategy-less, megalomaniac, futuristic visions of itself, he says. Go with the flow, I say.



Talking about flowing in the public sphere, in Italy, time and tide have forced 'Il Professore' Prodi to exit the Senate building while 'Il Cavaliere' clicks his heels with joy. Yet Brutus....I mean Silvio is an honourable man. And so what if many top officials in the 'governo' Italiano continue to sleep with the mafia; so what if the political parties converge and diverge, group and regroup, ascend and descend the ladders of power: the basic cogs and wheels of the Italian government's machinery continue to run undisturbed. The institutions and systems of civil society keep working smoothly regardless of who is heading the government. Bravo! I say.

Talking about admiration, which is one part envy, a friend shared an article by a Pakistani journalist where he compares the high flying growth and development in India with the lack of it among his own countrymen and tries to analyse the reason for this. He starts the article mentioning some DNA sequence called haplogroup R2 characterised by genetic marker M124 that is supposedly present in the population of the Indo-Pak sub-continent. Then he goes on to list some Indian achievements:

"Imagine, 12 percent of all American scientists and 36 percent of NASA scientists are Indians or of Indian origin; 38 percent of doctors in America are Indian; 34 percent of Microsoft employees and 28 percent of IBM employees are Indians.

For the record: Sabeer Bhatia created and founded Hotmail. Sun Microsystems was founded by Vinod Khosla. The Intel Pentium processor, that runs 90 percent of all computers, was fathered by Vinod Dham. Rajiv Gupta co-invented Hewlett Packard's E-speak project. Four out of ten Silicon Valley start-ups are run by Indians. Bollywood produces 800 movies per year and six Indian ladies have won Miss Universe/Miss World titles over the past 10 years.

India now has more than three dozen billionaires; Pakistan has not a single dollar billionaire. Azim Premji, the richest Muslim entrepreneur on the face of the planet, was born in Bombay and now lives in Bangalore. And Mukesh Ambani, the second richest man in India who can buy 100 percent of every company listed on the Karachi Stock Exchange (KSE) and still be left with $30 billion to spare, has currently become the richest person in the world, with net worth climbing to US$ 63.2 billion, compared to Bill Gates, the richest American, who stands at around $56 billion."

The ultimate paragraph and the punch line made me el-o-el, for the wrong reasons. He said: "Indians and Pakistanis have the same genetic sequence and marker: haplogroup M124. We have the same DNA molecule, the same DNA sequence. Our culture, our traditions and our cuisine are the same. We watch the same movies and sing the same songs. What is it that Indians do and we don't: *Indians elect their leaders.*" But, what about us Bangladeshis, I say. We have the same genetic origin too, AND we elect our leaders, yet look at us!

So, where did we go wrong? And we can't employ a 'cherchez la femme' theory either, since all three countries have had their share of leaders with the double X chromosome as well as the Y-chromosome M124-whatever factor.

Talking about female leaders past, present or future, Maya Angelou, the famous African-American poet and patron goddess of American opinion maker Oprah Winfrey, apparently has begged to differ from her protégé and writ-